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THE

LIFE OF COWPER.

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LET us return from a digression of sorrow, from the grave of Cowper's friend Rose, to Cowper himself in a state of chearfulness at Eartham, in the year 1792!—Pleased, and enlivened as he was, by the new scenery around him, he failed not to testify, with great tenderness, his frequent remembrance of the friends, most deservedly endeared to him in his own village.

LETTER I.

To Mrs. COURTENAY.

Eartham, August 25, 1792.

Without waiting for an answer to my last, I send my dear Catharina the epitaph she

desired, composed as well as I could compose it in a place where every object being still new to me, distracts my attention, and makes me as awkward at verse as if I had never dealt in it. Here it is:

EPITAPH ON FOP:

A DOG,

BELONGING TO LADY THROCKMORTON.

Though once a puppy, and though Fop by name,
Here moulders one, whose bones some honour claim;
No sycophant, although of spaniel race!
And though no hound, a martyr to the chace!
Ye squirrels, rabbits, leverets, rejoice!
Your haunts no longer echo to his voice.
This record of his fate exulting view,
He died worn out with vain pursuit of you!

"Yes!" the indignant shade of Fop replies,
"And worn with vain pursuit, man also dies!"

I am here, as I told you in my last, delightfully situated, and in the enjoyment of all that the most friendly hospitality can impart; yet do I neither forget Weston, nor my friends at Weston: On the contrary, I have at length, though much and kindly

pressed to make a longer stay, determined on the day of our departure—on the seventeenth of September we shall leave Eartham; four days will be necessary to bring us home again, for I am under a promise to General Cowper to dine with him on the way, which cannot be done comfortably, either to him or to ourselves, unless we sleep that night at Kingston.

The air of this place has been, I believe, beneficial to us both. I indeed was in tolerable health before I set out, but have acquired since I came, both a better appetite, and a knack of sleeping almost as much in a single night as formerly in two. Whether double quantities of that article will be favorable to me as a poet, time must shew. About myself however I care little, being made of materials so tough, as not to threaten me even now, at the end of so many *lustrums*, with any thing like a speedy dissolution. My chief concern has been about Mrs. Unwin, and my chief comfort at this moment is, that she likewise has received, I hope, considerable benefit by the journey.

Tell my dear George that I begin to long to behold him again, and did it not savour of ingratitude to the friend, under whose roof I am so happy

at present, should be impatient to find myself once more under yours.

Adieu! my dear Catharina. I have nothing to add in the way of news, except that Romney has drawn me in crayons; by the suffrage of all here, extremely like.

W. C.

LETTER II.

To the Rev. Mr. HURDIS.

Earthain, August 20, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your kind, but very affecting letter, found me not at Weston, to which place it was directed, but in a bower of my friend Hayley's garden at Earthain, where I was sitting with Mrs. Unwin. We both knew the moment we saw it from whom it came, and observing a red seal, both comforted ourselves that all was well at Burwash: but we soon felt that we were called not to rejoice, but to mourn with you—we do indeed sincerely mourn with you, and if it will afford you any consolation to

know it, you may be assured that every eye here has testified what our hearts have suffered for you. Your loss is great, and your disposition I perceive such as exposes you to feel the whole weight of it; I will not add to your sorrow by a vain attempt to assuage it; your own good sense, and the piety of your principles, will, of course, suggest to you the most powerful motives of acquiescence in the will of God. You will be sure to recollect that the stroke, severe as it is, is not the stroke of an enemy, but of a father; and will find I trust hereafter, that like a father he has done you good by it. Thousands have been able to say, and myself as loud as any of them, it has been good for me that I was afflicted; but time is necessary to work us to this persuasion, and in due time it shall be yours. Mr. Hayley, who tenderly sympathises with you, has enjoined me to send you as pressing an invitation as I can frame, to join me at this place. I have every motive to wish your consent, both your benefit and my own, which, I believe, would be abundantly answered by your coming, ought to make me eloquent in such a cause. Here you will find silence and retirement in perfection, when you would seek them, and here such company as I have no doubt would suit you; all cheerful, but

not noisy; and all alike disposed to love you: you and I seem to have here a fair opportunity of meeting. It were a pity we should be in the same county and not come together. I am here till the seventeenth of September, an interval that will afford you time to make the necessary arrangements, and to gratify me at last with an interview, which I have long desired. Let me hear from you soon, that I may have double pleasure, the pleasure of expecting, as well as that of seeing you.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, though still a sufferer by her last illness, is much better, and has received considerable benefit by the air of Eartham. She adds to mine her affectionate compliments, and joins me and Hayley in this invitation.

Mr. Romney is here, and a young man a Cousin of mine. I tell you who we are, that you may not be afraid of us.

Adieu! May the Comforter of all the afflicted, who seek him, be yours. God bless you.

W. C.

LETTER III.

To Lady HESKETH.

Eartham, August 26, 1792.

I know not how it is, my dearest Coz. but in a new scene, and surrounded by strange objects, I find my powers of thinking dissipated to a degree, that makes it difficult to me even to write a letter, and even a letter to you; but such a letter as I can, I will, and have the fairest chance to succeed this morning, Hayley, Romney, Hayley's Son, and Beau, being all gone together to the sea for bathing. The sea, you must know, is nine miles off, so that unless stupidity prevent, I shall have opportunity to write not only to you, but to poor Hurdis also, who is broken-hearted for the loss of his favorite Sister, lately dead; and whose letter, giving an account of it, which I received yesterday, drew tears from the eyes of all our party. My only comfort respecting even yourself is, that you write in good spirits, and assure me that you are in a state of recovery; otherwise I should mourn not only for Hurdis, but for myself, lest a certain event should reduce me, and

in a short time too, to a situation as distressing as his; for though nature designed you only for my Cousin, you have had a Sister's place in my affections ever since I knew you. The reason is, I suppose, that having no Sister, the Daughter of my own Mother, I thought it proper to have one, the Daughter of yours. Certain it is, that I can by no means afford to lose you, and that unless you will be upon honour with me, to give me always a true account of yourself, at least when we are not together, I shall always be unhappy, because always suspicious that you deceive me.

Now for ourselves. I am, without the least dissimulation, in good health; my spirits are about as good as you have ever seen them; and if encrease of appetite, and a double portion of sleep, be advantageous, such are the advantages that I have received from this migration. As to that gloominess of mind, which I have had these twenty years, it cleaves to me even here, and could I be translated to Paradise, unless I left my body behind me, would cleave to me even there also. It is my companion for life, and nothing will ever divorce us. So much for myself. Mrs. Unwin is evidently better for her jaunt, though by no means as she was before this last attack;

still wanting help when she would rise from her seat, and a support in walking; but she is able to use more exercise than she could at home, and moves with rather a less tottering step. God knows what he designs for me, but when I see those who are dearer to me than myself, distempered and enfeebled, and myself as strong as in the days of my youth, I tremble for the solitude in which a few years may place me. I wish her and you to die before me, but not till I am more likely to follow immediately. Enough of this!

Romney has drawn me in crayons, and in the opinion of all here, with his best hand, and with the most exact resemblance possible.

The seventeenth of September is the day on which I intend to leave Eartham. We shall then have been six weeks resident here; a holiday time long enough for a man who has much to do. And now farewell!

W. C.

P. S. Hayley, whose love for me seems to be truly that of a brother, has given me his picture, drawn by Romney about fifteen years ago: an admirable likeness.

LETTER IV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Eartham, Sept. 9, 1792.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I determine, if possible, to send you one more letter, or at least, if possible, once more to send you something like one, before we leave Eartham. But I am in truth so unaccountably local in the use of my pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could leap well no where but at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. This is, as I have already told you, a delightful place; more beautiful scenery I have never beheld nor expect to behold; but the charms of it, uncommon as they are, have not in the least alienated my affections from Weston. The genius of that place suits me better, it has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine feels peculiarly gratified; whereas here I see from every window, woods like forests, and hills like mountains, a wildness, in short, that rather increases my natural melancholy, and which were it not for the agreeables I find within, would soon convince me that mere

legal names of Cowper and of Thurlow. Knowledge, eloquence, and political importance, conspired to aggrandize the men, who added those names to the list of English nobility: yet after the lapse of a few centuries, they will shine only like very distant constellations, merely visible in the vast expanse of history. But at that time, the poet, of whom I speak, will continue to sparkle in the eyes of all men, like the radiant star of the evening, perpetually hailed by the voice of gratitude, affection, and delight. There is a principle of unperishable vitality (if I may use such an expression) in the compositions of Cowper; which must ensure to them in future ages, what we have seen them so happily acquire and maintain in the present; universal admiration, and love. His poetry is to the heart, and the fancy, what the moral essays of Bacon are to the understanding, a nevercloying feast;

"As if encrease of appetite had grown
"By what it fed on,"—

Like them, "it comes home to the business and bosom of every man." By possessing the rare and double talent to familiarize and endear the most awful subjects, and to dignify the most familiar, the poet naturally becomes a favorite with readers of every description: his works must interest every nation under Heaven, where his sentiments are understood, and where the feelings of humanity prevail. Yet their author is eminently an Englishman, in the noblest sense of that honorable appellation: he loved the constitution; he revered the religion of his country: he was tenderly, and generously, alive to her real interest and honor; and perhaps, of her many admirable poets, not one has touched her foibles, and celebrated her perfections, with a spirit so truly filial. But I perceive that I am in danger of going far beyond my design in this Introduc-

tory Letter, for it was my intention not to enter into the merits of his character here, but to inform you in what manner I wish to make that character display itself to my readers, as far as possible, in his own most impressive language. Perhaps no man ever possessed the powers of description in a higher degree, both in verse and prose. By weaving into the texture of these memoirs, an extensive selection of his private letters, and several of his posthumous poems, I trust that a faithful representation of him has been formed, where the most striking features will appear the work of his own inimitable hand. The result of the whole production will, I am confident, establish one most satisfactory truth, interesting to society in general, and to your Lordship in particular. The truth I mean, is expressed in the final verse of an epitaph, which the hand of friendship inscribed to your excellent relation:

"*His virtues form'd the magic of his song.*"

May the affectionate zeal, with which I have endeavoured to render all the justice in my power to his variety of merit, atone for whatever deficiencies shall be found in this imperfect attempt; and lead, both your Lordship, and our Country, to honor with some degree of approbation,

Your very faithful servant,

WILLIAM HAYLEY.

DESULTORY REMARKS,

ON THE

LETTERS OF EMINENT PERSONS,

PARTICULARLY THOSE OF

POPE AND COWPER.

"Epistolæ vitam ipsam hominis repræsentant."

ERASMUS.

DESULTORY REMARKS.

THE popular favor shewn to the Life of Cowper since its first appearance, may be justly ascribed to that irresistible attraction, which readers of every class have felt and acknowledged, in perusing the letters of the departed poet. They breathe, like his verse, such a pure spirit of morality and religion; they are so enlivened by a simple and graceful display of the benevolent affections; that our country seems to have received them, as a meritorious mother receives a legacy of honor from a dear distinguished son, when it appears to confirm, and to justify, all the tenderness, and all the energy, of her parental feelings.

The excellence of Cowper's letters has a visible proportion to the warmth and purity of his affection toward his correspondents; and as his heart was truly attached, both to his young friend Mr. Unwin, and to his more venerable associate Mr. Newton, his letters to these gentlemen are interesting in a very high degree. In writing to Mr. Newton on a subject of great nicety, the solicited communication of his new, and then unpublished poem the TASK, the poet gives every thing that is due to the delicacy of friendship, and maintains at the same time the dignity and independence of his own powerful and upright mind.

The following remarks were first printed as an introduction to a supplemental volume of his letters, most of which were addressed to these two confidential friends of the poet. Several were written at the time when he was employed on his greatest performance; and such letters were the more welcome, as the former correspondence afforded very few, that relate to that interesting period. In reprinting the Life, I have endeavoured to place the whole series of Letters in their proper chronological order, except in a few instances, where some occasional motive seemed to require a different arrangement.

Regarding the heart of Cowper, as one of the most pure and friendly, that heaven ever bestowed upon a mortal; and knowing that it was at all times his custom, to display his own heart to his confidential correspondents, not only with the utmost frankness and fidelity, but with an enchanting talent peculiar to himself; it has been my constant endeavour, to illustrate the different periods of his life, by such documents as I was able to discover in the custody of his surviving friends. I had often heard him mention his early and renewed intimacy with an accomplished and amiable scholar, once numbered among his favorite school-fellows at Westminster, the late Rev. Walter Bagot, of Blithfield, in Staffordshire. The kindness of a young and zealous coadjutor, afforded me a safe and easy communication with that gentleman. I had soon the gratification of perceiving, that he retained, in advanced life, all the cheerful active good-nature, and the classical erudition, which endeared him to Cowper in his juvenile days. He expressed a most obliging readiness to assist me in promoting the renown of that excellent writer, whose memory, both as a poet and a friend, we equally revered; and he most kindly submitted to my inspection and use, the collected manuscripts of Cowper,

that he had preserved from their earliest intercourse. After a pleasant juvenile letter, dated November 1749, their correspondence was suspended for many years. But it was renewed in 1785, and continued with reciprocal kindness, till the depression of Cowper's health precluded him from that affectionate intercourse with distant friends, in which he delighted and excelled.

I made such a selection from the whole correspondence, as my sentiments of regard, both to the living and the dead, suggested. Those who feel the charm of Cowper's epistolary language, had the gratification of finding several new letters, both serious and sportive. There is a passage in one of these, in which the author displays his moralizing disposition, with peculiar felicity. Perhaps that rich and ample field of morality, his whole collected works, affords not any remark more truly original and sublime. The public will make all due allowance for my partiality to the letters of my friend; which I am ever ready to allow, and in which (I am inclined to believe) the majority of readers will sympathize with me, in proportion as they compare him with the most eminent letter-writers of the antient and modern world; a comparison, which these desultory remarks were de-

signed to promote. I have been fortunately enabled to select and preserve such an extensive collection of Cowper's letters, as may give my reader a great degree of intimacy with this excellent personage. Yet many (I am persuaded) have perished, that were perfectly worthy of the press. A correspondence once existed between Cowper and his early friend Mr. Rowley, a gentleman who died, not long ago, in Ireland. His Letters to Cowper were French. The poet replied in Latin, a language of which he was particularly fond, and which he wrote with great facility and elegance. These letters have been all destroyed. But it may gratify the relations and friends of Mr. Rowley, to observe, that Cowper has spoken of him repeatedly, to other correspondents, in terms of the most cordial esteem. The praise of Cowper is so singularly valuable, from the reserve, and the purity of his disposition, that it would almost seem a cruel injury to suppress a particle of it, when deliberately, or even cursorily, bestowed. His sensibility was of a generous kind; his perception of excellence was exquisite; and his delight in praising it most liberal, even when he was a stranger to the person he praised. Witness the affectionate warmth and eloquence, with which he describes the writings

of Beattie! Those letters of Cowper will not be esteemed the least interesting, in which he has expressed his critical opinions, on several of his most celebrated contemporaries. Some readers will probably think, that his own attachment to the graces of simplicity in composition, has rendered him severe, to excess, in criticizing the style of two eminent historians, Robertson and Gibbon.

It is pleasing, however, to discover the genuine sentiments, that literary characters, of high distinction, entertained of other successful candidates for fame, who lived in their days. Cowper, in criticizing the popular authors of his own nation, cannot fail to interest an English reader. Indeed the letters of the poet have been honored with the notice, and the applause, of foreigners. A polite and liberal scholar of France, deeply versed in our literature, has confessed, that he never thought the writers of this country equal to those of his own, in all the excellencies of epistolary composition, till he read the letters of Cowper.

Gratified as I am, by a compliment so honorable to my departed friend, I am too zealous an advocate for the literary glory of our country, to admit, that the letter writers of England are collectively in-

ferior in merit, to those of any nation in the modern world.

I am aware, that some elegant and respectable critics of our island, have made this humiliating concession in favor of France. Melmoth, and Warton, have both expressed their regret, that we have not equalled our neighbours, the French, in this branch of literature: but I apprehend, a reference to a few remarkable, and well known English letters, will be sufficient to vindicate our national honor, in this article of taste and refinement.

If we turn to an early season of our epistolary language, we may observe, that the letter of Sir Philip Sidney to his sister Lady Pembroke, prefixed, as a dedication, to his Arcadia, is distinguished by tender elegance and graceful affection. The letters of Essex, the idol and the victim of the imperious and wretched Elizabeth, have been deservedly celebrated for their manly eloquence. At a period still more early, the letter of Ann Boleyn to Henry the Eighth, so justly recommended to public admiration by Addison, in the Spectator, displays all the endearing dignity of insulted virtue, and impassioned eloquence. I know not any letter in the female writers of France, distinguished as they are by their

epistolary talents, that can be fairly preferred to the pathetic composition of this lovely martyr. The French, indeed, have one celebrated writer of letters, the Marchioness de Sevigné, to whom we can hardly produce any individual as an exact parallel. But the letters of Lady Russel (not to mention those of Queen Mary to King William) may be cited, as equalling Madame Sevigné's in tenderness of heart; and Lady Mary Wortley Montague is assuredly a powerful rival to the Marchioness, in all the charms of easy, elegant language, and in vivacity of description. But in the highest charm of epistolary writing, that of gracefully displaying, without disguise or reserve, a most amiable character; and exciting, by that display, a tender and lively affection in the reader; in this epistolary excellence, Lady Mary is indeed as unequal to Madame Sevigné, as a thistle is inferior to a rose.

Maternal tenderness is the most lovely, the most useful and the sublimest quality, that God has given to mortals. It was the great characteristic of Madame Sevigné, and shews itself so repeatedly in her letters, that it may sometimes prove wearisome to readers not perfectly prepared to sympathize in her predominant feelings: but I question, if any

tender parent ever felt fatigued, in perusing even the excesses of her maternal solicitude. She has herself explained the powerful charm of her own letters, by describing, in the following words, the letters of her daughter:

" Je cherche quelquefois où vous pouvez trouver si précisement tout ce qu'il faut penser et dire; c'est en verité, dans votre cœur ; c'est lui, qui ne manque jamais ; et quoique vous ayez voulu dire autrefois à la louange de l'esprit, qui veut contrefaire le cœur, l'esprit manque, il se trompe, il bronche à tout moment; ses allures ne sont point égales, et les gens éclairés par le cœur n'y sauroient être trompés. Aimons donc, ma fille, ce qui vient si naturellement de ce lieu."

The enchanting mother of Madame de Grignan, had the tenderest of hearts: the mother of the eccentric traveller Wortley Montague, seems to have had a heart of a very different description, when we consider the manner in which she alludes to the indiscretions of her son, and the legacy of a guinea which she bequeathed to him by her will. The lady, in truth, must have been deplorably deficient in the compassionate virtues of her sex, who could pour forth her spleen, with such unmerciful and

disgusting malevolence, on the personal deformity of Pope. It has been suggested indeed, that the satirical poet was the aggressor, and provoked the indignation of the lady. The respectable writer who has recently prefixed memoirs of this lady to an elegant edition of her works, has spoken of her with that natural partiality, which an editor is allowed to feel for an author, whom he has long contemplated with pleasure; and especially, when that author appears entitled to peculiar regard, as a lady of distinction. In noticing the quarrel between her Ladyship and Pope, he endeavours to throw the odium of that quarrel entirely on the poet; accusing him of meanness, and of absolute falshood, in the declaration, by which he had positively asserted, that HE WAS NOT THE AGGRESSOR. There are no proofs of his falshood: on the contrary, there is a strong presumptive proof, that his declaration was perfectly sincere; as he had before empowered his friend Lord Peterborough, to give the offended lady, in private, a similar assurance. Lord Peterborough was, of all men then living, the last person, whom Pope, or any of his friends, could think of engaging

"To lend a lie the confidence of truth."

The letter of Lord Peterborough, in which he relates to Lady Mary his conversation with Pope on this affair, concludes with the following benevolent expressions: "I hope this assurance will prevent your further mistakes, and any consequences upon so odd a subject."

Such was the moral and religious character of Pope, that his serious protestation ought to be candidly received as decisive evidence, unless some very strong and unquestionable proof could be alledged against it; and the following words in his letter to Lord Hervey, form a protestation as clear and unequivocal as language can express:

"In regard to the Right Honorable Lady, your Lordship's friend, I was far from designing a person of her condition, by a name so derogatory to her as that of Sappho, a name prostituted to every infamous creature, that ever wrote verse or novels. I protest I never applied that name to her, in any verse of mine, public or private, and (I firmly believe) not in any letter or conversation."

The advocate of Lady Mary endeavours to prove the falsity of Pope in this protestation, by adducing passages from his works, in which the name of Sappho must evidently belong to the lady in

question: but the date of those works, in their first publication, is sufficient to vindicate the veracity of the author. He might apply the name of Sappho to Lady Mary, after she had, in the blindness of anger, taken the name to herself, without lessening the credit due to his earlier protestation. It should also be remembered, that the person to whom he first applied the name of Sappho, was the unfortunate woman, who was tempted by necessity, to print the letters of the poet to his early friend Mr. Cromwell; and Pope called her Sappho, in compliment to his friend who had given her the title.

It must however be admitted, that the offensive couplet, which so wonderfully excited the wrath of Lady Mary, is a disgrace to the poet, from the insufferable indelicacy of its language. But that he asserted an absolute falshood, concerning his own intention when he wrote it, nothing but irresistible evidence should induce the friends of literature to believe. Pope is peculiarly unfortunate in his two eminent biographers, Johnson and Warton; because each of them had felt the influence of an accidental and personal prejudice against him; which may account for their failing to vindicate his probity, with the zeal of truth and affection.

Warton considers him as the aggressor, in his quarrel with Lady Mary; yet what is here said on that subject will induce, I trust, every candid reader, to credit the express, and opposite, assertion of the poet.

Johnson, in noticing Pope's vindication of himself, in his letter to Lord Hervey, says, that "to a cool reader of the present time, it exhibits nothing but tedious malignity." The critic's censure on this remarkable composition, is a striking proof of his own malevolent prejudice against Pope. A friend to the poet would have justly observed, that his letter to Lord Hervey is one of the most acute, the most highly polished, and triumphant invectives, that resentment ever drew from a man of genius and virtue, provoked to the utmost by the grossest indignity. It is in miniature, what the oration of Demosthenes concerning the crown, appears on a larger scale; a personal defence, animated by conscious integrity, and flaming with proud contempt of an adversary, who was not destitute of abilities, but was overwhelmed in his furious attack upon a man of superior powers, and was lacerated by the shafts of eloquence, sharpened by indignation. The triumph

of Pope was indeed as complete as language could render it. But triumphs of this nature deserve perhaps to be considered rather as subjects of regret, than as sources of real glory. If the most eminent departed authors could revisit the human scene, after residing in a purer sphere, and revise their own productions, they would probably annihilate all the virulent invectives which the intemperance of human passions has so abundantly produced.

Among the pitiable infelicities in the frame of Pope, we may justly reckon the irritability of his temper; and it was an additional misfortune to him that some of his friends, whom he most esteemed, excited him to such an exercise of his talents as had a tendency to encrease his constitutional infirmity. Atterbury, who after perusing his character of Addison, exhorted him to persevere in the thorny path of satire, would have better consulted both the happiness, and the renown of his friend, had he endeavoured to lead his ductile spirit into a sublimer sphere of literary ambition.

But to speak of Pope as a writer of letters—In this character, as in that of a poet, he has had the ill-fortune to suffer by hasty and indiscriminate censure. It has been a fashion to say, the letters of

Pope are stiff, and affected. Even Cowper has spoken of them in such terms of general condemnation, as I am confident, his candid spirit would have corrected, had he been led to reflect and expatiate on the subject; for in truth, though many letters of Pope have the disgusting defects of formality and affectation, there are several, in which he makes a near approach to that excellence, that delightful assemblage of ease, freedom and dignity, which enchants the reader in the epistolary language of my departed friend. The Letters of Pope are valuable in many points of view. They exhibit extraordinary specimens of mental power, and a contemplative spirit in very early youth. They shew the progress of a tender, powerful and irritable mind, in its acquaintance with polished life, the delights it enjoyed, the vexations it endured, the infirmities it contracted, and the virtues it exerted, in a long career of memorable enmities, and of friendships more worthy of unfading remembrance. He has passed himself so just and manly a censure on his juvenile affectation of epistolary wit, that on this point he is entitled to mercy from the severest of critics. It is not so easy to excuse him for the excess of his flattery. Yet on this article a friendly admirer of the author may find

something to alledge in his behalf. Among the most offensive of his letters, we may reckon those to Lady Mary peculiarly disgusting, from their very gross, and very awkward adulation. But even this may be pardonable, if we allow, what appears very probable, that Pope was so fascinated by the beauty and attractions of this accomplished lady, that he was absolutely in love with her, though not conscious of his passion.—For the credit of both, it may be wished, that all traces of their intimacy, and of their quarrel, could be utterly forgotten; and the more so, because, with all their imperfections, each has displayed such a high degree of literary excellence, that the happier writings of both must be admired, as long as the language of England exists.

Lady Mary deserves to live in the grateful remembrance of her country, as the first English teacher and patroness of inoculation. She has probably rescued many thousand fair faces from the ravages of a deforming distemper. She would indeed have been still more intitled to perpetual benediction, had she been able to accomplish as much (by example or precept) toward diminishing the barbarous influence of those mental distempers,

envy, hatred and malice: but instead of banishing them from her own spirit, she has exhibited, in writing against Pope, a portentous offspring of their execrable power.—It would be a signal and a happy compliment to the literary reputation of this memorable lady, if her noble descendants would direct that the bitter verses, to which I allude, should be rejected from the future editions of her works. Her outrageous acrimony would then be gradually forgotten, as all who justly regard her memory must wish it to be. The verses in question may be rejected with the greater propriety, as they are said to have been partly composed by her associate, Lord Hervey. Let the peer and the poet (Hervey and Pope) shew themselves alternately mangling each other, with equal virulence, though with different abilities; but let not a lady, so truly admirable in many points of view, be exhibited to all generations, as brandishing the scalping-knife of satirical malignity! Her more temperate writings exhibit infinitely too much of that contemptuous and malevolent spirit, which she was apt to display, against several illustrious authors of her own time—a failing, for which she has been censured with great justice and eloquence by a female writer of the present age,

who may be regarded as greatly superior to Lady Mary, not only in the graceful virtues most suited to her sex, butin her poetical talents. The candid, elegant, and animated biographer of Richardson (Mrs. Barbauld) has admirably vindicated the mental dignity of that enchanting moralist against the sarcastic detraction of Lady Mary.

But let us return to the Letters of Pope. If they have sunk in the estimation of the Public, there certainly was a time, when they contributed not a little to his renown. Even his unfriendlybiographer, Johnson, says on this subject—"Pope's private "correspondence, thus promulgated, filled the na- "tion with praises of his candour, tenderness, and "benevolence, the purity of his purposes, and the "fidelity of his friendship."

This is probably the truth, though the doctor seems to contradict himself in the course of a few pages, and says, with remarkable inconsistency, in speaking of the Letters published by Pope.—"The "book never became much the subject of conver- "sation. Some read it, as a contemporary history; "and some perhaps, as a model of epistolary lan- "guage. But those who read it, did not talk of it. "Not much therefore was added by it, to fame, or "envy."

If the surreptitious edition of Pope's Letters produced such a striking effect in the poet's favor, as the Doctor at first asserted, it is very improbable that Pope's authentic publication of his own correspondence should be so little regarded. There is also great improbability in the Doctor's conjecture, that Pope himself, with a very mean artifice, contrived the first clandestine appearance of his own letters. Had he previously wished to print them, he might have pleaded the precedent of Howel's Letters, a popular book of our own country, and of merit sufficient to attract the notice and applause of foreigners; for the learned Morhof, in his History of Literature, expresses a wish that Howel's Letters may be translated into Latin or German. If Pope wished for higher authority, among the poets of other nations, he might have found such an authority in the elder Tasso, who in writing to his friend, Claudio Tolomei, praises him with enthusiastic admiration, for having published one of the earliest collection of familiar letters in the Italian language, which the poet considers as worthy of being regarded as models; and in friendly emulation of which, he avows a design of imparting to the world, two books of his own private letters.

It is but just however to observe, on the other side, that Erasmus, a favorite author in the estimation of Pope, has said in one of his Letters, that he would by no means advise any writer to publish his own Letters, in his life time:—"Nulli velim autor esse, ut ipse vivus edat." The mild Erasmus confesses he wanted courage himself, for such a display of his talents; and declares, he wondered that St. Barnard not only published Letters of his own, but Letters, in which he had not scrupled to stigmatize the names of many.

Let us revert to the letters of Pope.—"His epistolary excellence, (says Johnson) had an open field; he had no English rival living or dead." The biographer, before he made this remark, enumerated a few English writers of letters, who had preceded Pope; but he forgot Sir William Temple, whose celebrated Letter to Lady Essex, on the death of her daughter, is a master-piece of tender reproof, and friendly admonition, against the indulgence of intemperate sorrow; a letter admirable for its eloquence, and worthy of perpetual commendation, as medicinal to every suffering parent, whom tenderness of heart may expose to the pitiable excesses of natural affliction.

If the English are inferior to other nations of the modern world, in the multitude of collected letters, we may certainly produce single examples of excellence, not surpassed by foreigners, in letters of diversified description.

In a consolatory letter, Sir William Temple has no rival to apprehend: in a letter of manly application to the mercy of a tyrant, (perhaps the kind of letter, which it may be most difficult to write simply, and gracefully!) the poet Cleveland addressing Oliver Cromwell, appears intitled to a similar encomium: and for a letter of laconic dignity, we may produce, without a fear of seeing her surpassed, the "high born, and high spirited Anne, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke, and Montgomery."

Lord Bacon has expressed his very high esteem of epistolary writing, in the following terms:—"letters, such as are written from wise men, are, of all the words of men, in my judgment, the best." Yet this wonderful man is himself very far from appearing to such advantage in his letters, as in his Moral Essays—the latter contain the pure essence of his powerful mind, the former are debased by the dregs of it. His Essays are an exquisite production

of knowledge, wisdom, and piety—his letters, a coarse tissue of artifice, adulation and servility.

In a letter to Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Davies, who was gone to compliment James the First, on his accession to the throne of England, Bacon says—"I commend myself to your love, and the "well-using my name—in imprinting a good con-"ceit and opinion of me, chiefly in the King—"so desiring you to be good to *concealed poets*, I con-"tinue your assured friend."

These remarkable words seem to imply, that Bacon wished Davies to represent him to the King, as privately devoted to poetry; and so he sometimes was. If he had this intention, it proves that he very early understood the various modes of obtaining favor with the new monarch; for when James saw Davies, he asked if he was *Nosce teipsum*, alluding to the title of his celebrated poem, and being informed that his new attendant was indeed the author of that admirable work, he gave him expectations of future promotion, which he soon fulfilled. There is a letter of Bacon to James, on being created Viscount St. Alban's, which enumerates the various favors he had received from that sovereign; but instead of displaying the genuine eloquence of manly

gratitude, it contains a very poor conceit. Even in writing to the King's daughter, the Queen of Bohemia, on the occasion of presenting to her, his History of Henry the Seventh, Bacon is far from producing a graceful letter.—But it is painful to dwell on the imperfections of so great a genius—let us return to the moral poet, who described him truly and energetically, in a single verse.

One of the most interesting and manly letters of the collection addressed to Pope, is the last of Arbuthnot's; containing the dying advice of that genuine, accomplished friend, to the too irritable poet. Pope, in his reply, assigns his reasons for not adhering exactly to admonition, of which he acknowledges the kindness: but, as Warton has very justly observed on the occasion, his reasons are not so solid as the admonition; and indeed the poet's letter is by no means so gracefully written, as that of the friendly physician, a man equally distinguished by the moral gaiety of his life, and by his serene preparation for death—a man so happily free from all flagrant misconduct, that his greatest fault seems to have been an inattention to the due preservation of his own admirable writings; for some

of them, it is said, he suffered his children to destroy, in the shape of playthings.

Of Pope's letters taken altogether, it may be justly asserted, that they tend to confirm that brief but honorable eulogy, which Bolingbroke, in a season of awful veracity, pathetically pronounced over his expiring friend: "O great God! what is man?—I "never knew a person, that had so tender a heart for "his particular friends, or a warmer benevolence for "all mankind!"

Perhaps, the most admirable of Pope's letters, is his farewell to Atterbury: it displays both the tenderness, and the dignity of true friendship; for the writer was perfectly sincere in his enthusiastic attachment both to Atterbury and to Bolingbroke; two extraordinary men, whose social accomplishments were so powerfully brilliant, that they seem to have rendered the moral and penetrating poet absolutely blind to that pestilent ambition, which spotted the character both of the statesman and of the prelate.

Johnson speaks candidly of Pope, in saying, "he is seen in the collection of his Letters, as connected with the other contemporary wits; and certainly suffers no disgrace in the comparison." This is undoubtedly true, in the important articles of

strong sense, and lively fancy; but he frequently appears inferior to his correspondents in the lighter graces of epistolary language; particularly, inferior to Bolingbroke, whose stile is remarkable for the happiest union of ease, vivacity, and vigor.

The letters of Bolingbroke, lately printed, (in Mr. Coxe's elaborate and candid Life of Sir Robert Walpole) from the Egremont Papers, are admirably written; and I may assist some future biographer of Bolingbroke, by observing, that the private collection, from which the letters I speak of were selected, contains one very memorable letter, though properly omitted by the historian of Walpole, as not connected with his design:—it is a letter of great pathos and eloquence, dated Argeville, July 7, 1740, and addressed to the Son of Sir William Wyndham, on the death of his father; a letter highly honorable to the writer, in the character of a friend!

Bolingbroke and Swift, have both spoken of the most eminent letter-writers, in their correspondence with Pope; let us observe how each expresses himself on the talent in which they both excelled.

"I believe," says Swift to Pope; (October 21, 1735,) "my letters have escaped being published, "because I writ nothing but nature, and friend-

" ship, and particular incidents, which could make " no figure in writing: I have observed, that not only " Voiture, but likewise Tully, and Pliny, writ their " letters for the public view, more than for the sake " of their correspondents; and I am glad of it, on " account of the entertainment they have given me."

" I seek no epistolary fame," says Bolingbroke, in the postscript of an earlier letter from Pope to Swift, (April 14, 1730,) " but am a good " deal pleased, to think, that it will be known here- " after, that you and I lived in the most friendly in- " timacy together. Pliny writ his letters for the " public; so did Seneca, so did Balzac, Voiture, &c. " Tully did not; and therefore these give us more " pleasure, than any which have come down to us " from antiquity. When we read them, we pry " into a secret, which was intended to be kept from " us—that is a pleasure—we see Cato, and Brutus, " and Pompey, and others, such as they really " were; and not such, as the gaping multitude of " their own age took them to be; or as historians and " poets have represented them to ours; that is a- " nother pleasure. I remember to have seen a pro- " cession at Aix-la-Chapelle, wherein an image of " Charlemagne is carried on the shoulders of a man

" who is hid by the long robe of the imperial saint;
" follow him into the vestry, you see the bearer slip
" from under the robe, and the gigantic figure dwin-
" dles into an image of the ordinary size, and is set
" by among other lumber."

The noble author has very happily illustrated his just idea, concerning the ostentatious display of public characters, imperfectly known; but the opposite intentions, which he ascribes to Cicero and to Pliny, concerning their Letters, were not, I apprehend, exactly the intentions of the two illustrious Romans, whose names have derived so much lustre from their epistolary talents. All the letters of Cicero were certainly not intended for the eye of the public, but many most probably were so. The great orator had so fervent a passion for fame, that he was eager to spread every sail, by which a breath of glory could be caught.

The more succinct, but less powerful Pliny, very candidly confesses a similar passion. He takes a pride in the elegance of his Letters:—" Habeant nostræ quoque literæ aliquid non humile, nec sordidum, nec privatis rebus inclusum." Yet Pliny seems not to have intended, that the world should see such of his letters, as relate only to the little circumstan

ces of his private and domestic life. He is a gainer, however, by the perfect knowledge of his character, which these Letters afford; for, in various points of view, he appears interesting and amiable.

Montaigne is uncommonly severe, in describing the Letters of Cicero and Pliny, as proofs of their inordinate vanity; but if that pleasant essayist should excite a frown by the severity of his remarks on these favorite authors, he may lead his reader to smile again, at the honest vanity he displays himself, while he is censuring the vanity of the two Roman Consuls; since in the same chapter, he commends his own talents for epistolary composition.

It may be regretted, that in the rich mass of antient Grecian literature, we find no collections of familiar letters, to be compared with those of Cicero and Pliny. Indeed there are hardly any written by men of eminence, and intitled to the name of familiar letters, if we except a few of Æschines, the orator; who seems, in his epistolary talent, to have been the Bolingbroke of Athens. In one of his letters, he relates, with vivacity, a ludicrous and licentious adventure of a young fellow-traveller, with whom he visited the plain of Troy. As it seems to have been the intention of Æschines, in these travels, to com-

pare the scenery around him with the descriptions of it exhibited by Homer, it may be wished, that this eloquent Athenian (whose command of language was in some points perhaps superior to that of his triumphant rival Demosthenes) had made his intended comparison the subject of another letter.

Although the letters of philosophers and rhetoricians to princes, are scarcely to be classed with such epistolary composition, as arises from familiarity and friendship, I am tempted to notice two remarkable Letters included in the works of Plato, and Isocrates. The first may be fairly considered as a private letter, since the philosopher entreats his correspondent, the younger Dionysius, to read it repeatedly, and then to burn it. In truth, he had abundant reason for such a request; as the letter contains a singular confession, that this admired instructor had never published his own genuine sentiments on some abstruse points of philosophy, but contented himself with delivering the opinions of his master.—Vide Platonis, vol XI. p. 72—Edit. Biponti.

The letter of Isocrates, to which I have alluded, is addressed to Alexander of Macedon, during the life of his father, Philip. It is a brief, benevo-

lent, and graceful compliment, from an illustrious veteran of literature, to a highly promising youth.—Vide Isocratis, vol. 1. p. 454.—Edit. Auger.

When we consider the passion for news which animated the Greeks, and the extreme vivacity of their character, it seems rather surprising, that in the remains of antiquity, we find such a small number of early Greek epistles; and so little said by their rhetoricians, concerning the most admired of their epistolary writers. Some information on this subject, may however be gleaned from the treatise on elocution, that bears the name Demetrius Phalereus, from the collections of Stobæus, and the Bibliotheca of Photius.

The learned Abbé Barthelemy, who, in his elaborate and masterly work of many years, Le Voyage du jeune Anacharsis, describes the library of an Athenian, does not represent it (if I remember right) as containing any collection of letters. Yet probably the libraries of Athens, at that period, were not destitute of such an amusing, and instructive branch of literature. The first collector of letters, if we may rely on the authority of Clemens Alexandrinus and of Tatian, was a Persian princess, who bore the name of Atossa; for the Greek expression used

by these authors, seems rather to mean the forming a collection of letters, than the teaching how letters should be written, as some of their interpreters have strangely supposed. Who this interesting Atossa really was, although she is called by Bentley, the mother of Xerxes, it would not perhaps be easy to ascertain; as the name belonged to several Asiatic princesses, and Clemens Alexandrinus is supposed by some critics, to have confounded Atossa with Semiramis.

Demetrius Phalereus, or the rhetorician who assumed his name, celebrates Aristotle for having perfectly conceived the proper idea of a letter; observing also, that the morals of a man may be discerned in all his compositions, but above all in his letters.—The name of Aristotle reminds me, that the memorable letter of Philip to that Philosopher, on the future education of Alexander, may be regarded as a model of princely politeness.

To become intimately acquainted with the illustrious characters of Greece, in her days of glory, by the aid of their familiar letters, would afford such a gratification to the lovers of literature, that it is not surprising, if some letters have been fabricated for

the purpose of ascribing them to the splendid names of Themistocles, Euripides, &c.

In the collection of Greek Letters, whose authenticity has been so frequently questioned, there are three of a very interesting nature, ascribed to Theano, the wife, or, some authors imagine, the daughter of Pythagoras. These letters are so good, that the accomplished German poet and moralist, Wieland, has translated them into his own language, asserting, that their merit has induced him to believe them genuine; and strongly recommending to the ladies of his country, the laudable sentiments they display. The first letter contains advice to a mother on the education of her children; the second, advice to a wife, not to resent too roughly the infidelity of a husband; and the third, to a young married friend, on the management of her female domestics.

The authenticity of the five letters ascribed to Euripides, is strenuously asserted by Barnes, and as vehemently denied by Bentley; two laborious and deep searchers into all the reliques of Grecian literature; yet two pedantic scholars, so ungraceful in the use of their own language, that neither of them can be justly supposed competent to decide a doubtful question of this kind, by that perfect delicacy of taste, which is sometimes imagined to constitute a

sort of intuitive sagacity, sufficient to detect any literary imposture.

Experience has abundantly shewn, that in questions concerning the authenticity of ancient compositions, "much may be said on both sides," to use the gentle phrase of the benevolent Sir Roger de Coverly; and the Epistles of Phalaris are a memorable example to confirm his remark. Those Epistles afforded an extensive field to the active, and contentious spirit of Bentley, who delighted to display his admirable erudition, and his controversial fortitude, against a host of assailants. They seem to have considered him as the Polypheme of literature, and to have amused themselves in deriding the intemperance of his anger, though they might shudder at his strength. Had not that extraordinary scholar been influenced by a singular passion for such disputes, he would hardly have produced his curious disertations on the epistles of Phalaris; as the young nobleman, who re-published those epistles, suggested, in his preface, some arguments, that tended to prove them spurious, instead of asserting that they were not so. Bentley prided himself on detecting the imposture. He is believed to have had truth on his side, in denying them to be genuine.

An admirable judge of such controversies, the late accomplished and amiable Mr. Tyrwhit, represents Bentley crushing his adversaries, as with a stroke of thunder, (adversarios velut fulmine prostravisse contentus) yet he conducted the dispute in such a manner, that his young and graceful antagonist, with the assistance of some powerful allies, so far triumphed over the thundering critic, that he exposed the Doctor's petulance to universal derision; and abundantly proved, that however profound he might be as a scholar, he was deplorably deficient in those accomplishments, which ought ever to accompany great learning; good manners, good language, and good-nature.

Not content with asserting, that the Epistles could not be written by Phalaris, Bentley considered them as the composition of some foolish sophist; an idea, which only shews, that he had not taste enough to relish that kind of merit, which the Epistles certainly possess, and which had so forcibly struck the accomplished Sir William Temple, that he was lavish in their praise. The merit I mean, is that of exhibiting many noble sentiments, embellished by brief, perspicuous, and energetic expression.

Here let us observe, to the honor of poetry,

that the Epistles of Phalaris are partly indebted for their celebrity, to that benevolent satisfaction, which readers in general receive, in finding a great poet treated with peculiar regard and distinction, by a person possessed of despotic authority. The letters in which Phalaris is supposed to represent himself as friendly and liberal to the poet Stesichorus, and to his family, inspire an inclination to believe them genuine; because they soothe the mind with an idea, that great literary talents are able to soften, and correct, the ferocity of a tyrant.

It is however most probable, they were not written by Phalaris; but of the greater part of them it may be justly said, they are evidently not the compositions of any foolish, and frivolous character.

If I may venture to indulge a hasty conjecture, where conjectures are so likely to mislead, I would say, it seems not improbable, the epistles of Phalaris might be witten by some young Roman, of a cultivated, and powerful mind; who, like Atticus, Cicero, and Brutus, devoted some time at Athens, to acquire completely the talent of writing the Greek language; and who, in the course of such study, might compose, as literary exercises, the letters in question.

Having started the supposition, I leave the learned, and ingenious reader, to amuse himself by examining, how far it will account (as I think it may) both for the merits, and the defects, that have given such a sort of motley reputation to these memorable Epistles. It is now a general persuasion, that they are not genuine; but many of the arguments that Bentley produced, to prove them not written by Phalaris, were arguments of an unfortunate cast, and turned against him by his adversaries, with admirable dexterity of derision. There is hardly any piece of controversial ridicule, more happy in its execution, than that part of Boyle's reply to Bentley, in which he shews, how a future critic might prove, in copying the Doctor's arguments against Phalaris, that Bentley's dissertation was not written by the Doctor.

In saying, that the Epistles of Phalaris might be written by a Roman student at Athens, I do not mean to insinuate, that none of the later Grecian sophists had talents equal to such a production. In that tribe of literary characters (often contemptuously described, and often meriting such contempt) there were undoubtedly several individuals, perfectly able to fabricate a fictitious series of sensible, and animated epistles.

Among the works of several sophists who bore the name *Philostratus*, there is a curious letter, in which the author delivers his opinion of epistolary writers.

In enumerating those, who appear to him *after the antients*, (such is his expression) to have best understood the proper character of epistolary language, he mentions Apollonius and Dion, among the philosophers; of commanders, Brutus, or his secretary; of the emperors, Marcus Aurelius; of the orators, Herodes Atticus:—he censures, however, the latter, for an affectation of attic elegance; and very justly observes, that perspicuity should be the primary quality in all works of literature, and especially in a letter.

Of all the later Pagan epistolary writers in Greek, whose productions have been preserved, Libanius is one of the most voluminous; and he has been celebrated for excellence in this species of composition. Gibbon speaks too contemptuously, perhaps, of his extensive correspondence—near two thousand letters! In some of them, the high-spirited friend and correspondent of Julian, is far from deserving the title of a *dreaming pedant*. If he was vain in the display of his own literary powers, he

was liberal in commending the eloquence of a rival. In one of his letters to Themistius, (printed in the Bibliotheca Græca of Fabricius) Libanius bestows on the philosopher this singular eulogy—"Telemachus did not so much resemble his father in person, as you resemble Demosthenes in your orations." Themistius was not only distinguished by his eloquence, but regarded for the benevolent mildness of his character. He seems to have enjoyed the rare felicity, of being equally esteemed by a christian bishop, and by an apostate emperor. Some letters of Julian are addressed to him; which leads me to observe, that Julian is intitled to some praise for his epistolary talents; particularly for a manly expression, contained in one of his short letters to a painter—"Such as you have seen me, such represent me!" Happy, if he had discovered the same attachment to simplicity and truth, in the more important concerns of Religion! Some Christian fathers of the church, in the age of Julian, are eminent for epistolary elegance; especially the poetical Gregory Nazianzen—the bishop to whom I alluded, as the friend of the philosopher Themistius.

But to descend to the letter-writers of the modern world. On the multitudes in different nations,

whose epistles are printed, in Latin, I will only say, that the Eloisa who inspired Pope, stands at the head of this innumerable host, for the eloquence of the heart. The use of Latin retarded the advances of epistolary improvement in the slowly formed languages of modern Europe; particularly in French, English, and German. Italian vivacity, and Spanish gravity, seem to have employed themselves in making collections of private letters, before any such publication appeared in the languages of England, or France. I have already mentioned the letters of the elder Tasso. Italian letters, still more remarkable, were printed at Venice, in 1551; the letters of ladies, princes, and various eminent persons, addressed to that strange example of extensive, but short-lived celebrity, the satirist Aretine, whose own letters amount to six volumes. Aretine prides himself on being the first publisher of familiar letters; a distinction that some writers had endeavoured to take from him: but to this distinction, his very learned and judicious biographer, Mazzuchelli, though by no means partial to Aretine, has candidly vindicated his title. Montaigne represents the Italians as the chief publishers of letters; and says, he possessed in his own library, a hundred volumes of such publications; and

that he esteemed the letters of Annibal Caro as the best of all.

The literature of Italy has been enriched with many excellent collections of letters, since the days of Montaigne; and with one, peculiarly interesting to those, who delight in anecdotes relating to painting and sculpture; a collection, in seven quarto volumes, of letters written by the most eminent artists, and relating to works of art.

In the Spanish language, there is a copious volume of letters by Don Antonio de Guevara, a prelate, who held the office of historiographer to the Emperor Charles the fifth; and a prelate of so nice a conscience, that he directed by his will, a part of his salary to be restored to his majesty, for a year in which he had added nothing to his chronicle. His style, as a historian, has been generally censured; but if we may judge of his personal character from his letters, he appears to have been an amiable man. In one, he reproves a female relation, with good-nature, for intemperate sorrow on the death of a little dog; and in another, he draws the character of a true friend, with great energy of sentiment and expression.

The scholars of Spain, wrote and printed let-

ters, in their own language, before the polished age of the Emperor Charles the fifth. There is a collection of Spanish letters by Fernan Gomez de Ciudareal, the first edition of which is said to have been printed in 1499. The author was physician to John the second, king of Castile—they contain some entertaining particulars relating to the history, and manners of that time. It appears, from one of them, that the king amused himself in improving a Spanish couplet of his poet and historiographer, Juan de Mena; who seems to have been very highly esteemed, as a friend, by the author of these letters.

The last of the collection, dated July 1454, contains an account of the king's death—he said to his physician, three hours before he expired—"I wish I had been born the son of a mechanic, and not king of Castile."

The physician seems to have had a personal regard for his sovereign; as he intimates, in the close of his letter, that he might be retained in the court of his successor, but that he felt too old to attach himself to a new master.

The French have undoubtedly many collections of letters, that deserve high commendation; but their two celebrated letter-writers, who were for

some time the favorites of Europe, Voiture and Balzac, lost much of their celebrity, when taste grew more refined, and learned to value ease and simplicity, as graces essential to a good epistolary style. They had, however, the merit of giving an early polish to the language of their country: they introduced into French prose, a degree of fluency, and force, which it had not before, but which subsequent writers have carried to much greater perfection. Every modern nation might exhibit a collection of interesting letters, so judiciously formed, as to display, in a very agreeable manner, the rise and gradual progress of improvement in its language. In France, the writers of printed letters are so numerous, that the difficulty of selection would arise from their multitude. Lord Orrery, the translator of Pliny, bestows singular commendation on the epistolary language of Pelisson; and Dr. Warton has justly said, in a remark prefixed to the correspondence of Pope, that the letters of Voltaire, amounting to eighteen volumes; "contain a variety of literary history and criticism, written also to the most celebrated persons of the age, hardly to be equalled or excelled."

The letters of Voltaire are indeed admirable for their gaiety, and their wit: there is also a rich

vein of tender, bold, and generous humanity, running through his extensive correspondence, that may sometimes almost lead a reader to exclaim, in the words of his own Zara, as she speaks in English,

"Were he but Christian, what could man be more."

But the bitter leaven of sacastic infidelity predominates so frequently in his letters, that it excites in a Christian reader, pain, proportioned to the admiration, awakened by the versatile powers of a man, unrivalled in the variety, and in the vivacity of his talents.

If the letters of any French poet are worthy of being compared with those of Cowper, for purity and tenderness of sentiment, they must be the letters of Racine to his friend Boileau, and those addressed to his own son.

If, among the popular authors of other nations, we should seek for the individual, who may be mentioned as a parallel to Cowper, in the simplicity, the sweetness, and the sanctity of his character, both as a man, and a poet; perhaps we might most properly fix on the amiable Gellert, the favorite of Germany. Though not equal to the

author of the Task, in the energy of his poetical powers, he excited in his countrymen, of all ranks, that enthusiastic regard, which England, to her own honor, has felt for the ch aracter of Cowper.

The letters of Gellert display an uncommon share of that tender melancholy, that religious fervor, that innocent playfulness of fancy, and that spirit of genuine friendship, which give such attraction to the correspondence of Cowper; who, in these qualities, and in the elegant simplicity of his style, has hardly an equal, and certainly not a superior, among the most celebrated letter-writers of England.

It is remarkable, though I do not recollect to have seen it observed by those, who have lately enumerated our early epistolary writers, that Bishop Hall, who spoke of himself, with complacency as the first of English satirists, has declared himself the first publisher of English epistles.

There is a little volume, neatly printed in 1608, containing four decads of epistles, by this patriotic and memorable divine. To these he added two decads more, in 1611.

In dedicating his book to Prince Henry, the author says; "further, (which these times account

not the least praise) your grace shall herein perceive a new fashion of discourse, by Epistles new to our language, usual to others; and (as novelty is never without some plea of use) more free, more familiar. Thus we do but talk with our friends by our pen, and express ourselves no whit less easily, somewhat more digestedly."

Many of Hall's epistles may be considered as brief, and excellent sermons, being full of religious admonition: there are however a few of them, that seem fairly intitled to the name of familiar letters; particularly the fifth epistle of the first decad—to Sir Thomas Challoner, "a report of some observations in my travell." Sir Edmund Bacon was Hall's fellow-traveller. The eighth Epistle in the same decad: to the young Earl of Essex, "advice for his travels." And the second Epistle of the second decad: "of the benefit of retirednesse, and secrecy." to Sir Edmund Bacon.

In a passion for retirement, in vivacity of imagination, and purity of heart, this exemplary prelate seems to have resembled the more illustrious poetical recluse of Weston; and considering the age in which the Bishop wrote, it is paying a very high

and just compliment to his epistolary language, to say, it has several passages, which might be almost mistaken for the language of Cowper.

This remark leads me to return to the letters of my friend.—I have so warmly expressed my opinion of their singular excellence, that it is unnecessary to add any words in their praise. The peculiar ease, harmony and grace of Cowper's epistolary style, must be obvious to every intelligent reader; nor is a comment required to prove, that the universal delight, with which his letters are perused, arises particularly from their displaying

"That lovely sight, a guileless human heart."

To parody a verse of Young, which it is hardly possible to pronounce, in its original state, without shuddering at the dark, and distressful idea it exhibits.

The letters of a recluse are naturally full of egotism; but egotism, which may be a disgrace indeed to some compositions, is rather a merit, and a charm in the letters of persons, whom we love and esteem. Gibbon says happily on this subject, in writing to his excellent mother in law; "We all

delight to talk of ourselves, and it is only in letters, in writing to a friend, that we can enjoy that conversation, not only without reproach or interruption, but with the highest propriety and mutual satisfaction."

The lovers of genius and virtue, must peruse the correspondence of Cowper with the eyes of a friend; and in doing so, they will feel gratified in being enabled to read, what was evidently written for the eyes of friendship alone. They will not think, that he talks too much of himself; for what man, so worthy of being intimately known, could be thought to do so, in talking to a friend, without vanity or affectation?

If in selecting his letters for the press, I should alarm the volatile reader by admitting several of a devotional spirit, I will ingenuously confess my reason for imparting them to the public. There is such tender simplicity, such attractive sweetness, in these serious letters, that I am confident, few professed works of devotion can equal their efficacy, in awakening and confirming sincere and simple piety, in persons of various persuasions. His letters and his poetry will, in this respect, al-

ternately extend, and strengthen the influence of each other. He wrote occasionally to clerical friends of the established church, and to others among the dissenters. His heart made no difference between them, for it felt toward both the fraternal sensations of true Christianity.

The cordial admirers of the poet, may exult to reflect, that after perusing both his deliberate productions, and the casual effusions of his pen, they may justly say of each, what Prior said in verse to Sherlock, on his practical discourse concerning death.

"Of heavenly manna 'tis a second feast,
"A nation's food, and all to every taste."

In continuing to commend the compositions of Cowper, I am perfectly aware, that I have been censured as too lavish in the praise of my friend. My only reply to such censure shall be to close these Desultory Remarks on epistolary writers, with a brief and sweet epistle of Pliny, which expresses most happily all my own feelings on the censure, to which I allude. I am gratified in observing, that I share the discredit, or the honor, arising from such

a charge, with one of the most estimable writers of the ancient world, and to justify my perseverance in sentiments, which no adversary could induce me to renounce, I have a pleasure in adopting the very opposite vindication of an advocate so illustrious and so amiable.

C. Plinius Septitio suo.

"Ais quosdam apud te reprehendisse tanquam amicos meos ex omni occasione ultra modum laudem. Agnosco crimen, amplector etiam. Quid enim honestius culpâ benignitatis? Qui sunt tamen isti, qui amicos meos melius nôrint? Sed ut nôrint, quid invident mihi felicissimum errorem? Ut enim non sint tales, quales à me prædicantur, ego tamen beatus quod mihi videntur.—Igitur ad alios hanc sinistram diligentiam conferant: nec sunt parum multi, qui carpere amicos suos judicium vocant: mihi nunquam persuadebunt, ut meos amari à me nimium putem—Vale."—Plin. Lib. 7—Epist. 28.

It may gratify many readers to find here a version of Pliny's letter, transcribed from Melmoth, his justly admired translator.

To Septitius.

There are, it seems, who have condemned me to you, as being upon all occasions too lavish in commendation of my friends. I acknowledge the charge, and glory in it too; for can there be a nobler error than an excess of benevolence? But still, who are these, let me ask, that are better acquainted with my friends than I am myself? Yet grant there are any such, why will they deny me so pleasing a mistake? For supposing my friends deserve not the highest encomiums I give them, certainly I am happy in believing they do. Let them recommend then this ungenerous strictness to those (and their number is not inconsiderable) who imagine they shew their judgment, when they indulge their censure. As for myself, they will never be able to persuade me, I can be guilty of an excess in friendship. Farewell!

Soon after these Remarks were first sent to the press, a young friend, extensively acquainted with German literature, obligingly sent me a work of Gellert, which I had never seen, and which my

friend had kindly translated into English, that I might peruse it with the greater rapidity. It is entitled—"A practical Essay on good taste in Epistolary Writing." Its chief purpose was, to caution the author's young disciples against the false taste that had prevailed in some admired letter-writers of his own country; but it contains many judicious observations, on various authors of universal celebrity.

"The number of German treatises on letter-writing (says Gellert) is considerable, those in Latin however are by far the most numerous. They have been chiefly composed by men of deep erudition; and serve to shew, that the attempt to reduce letter-writing to a regular art, is a fruitless undertaking."

Gellert, after enumerating some of these unprofitable attempts, proceeds thus——"The short letter of Gregory Nazianzen to Nicobulus, on the conciseness, perspicuity, and elegance of a letter, is worth more perhaps than many cumbrous treatises." This animated eulogy led me to examine the letter so recommended, and a very lively passage at the end of it, pleased me particularly. "I will close (says Gregory to his correspondent) by telling you what I heard from a man of judgment, speaking of the eagle —when the birds assembled to chuse a sovereign,

and most of them had adorned themselves with a variety of ornaments, the eagle was allowed to be the most beautiful, because he made no pretensions to beauty." This little fable may serve to illustrate the singular charm that belongs to Cowper, in his epistolary character—the language of his letters is the eagle of Gregory.

I am the less inclined to fear, that partiality to my incomparable friend may have led me to overrate the excellence of his letters, because several most competent judges of their merit, not personally acquainted with Cowper, have assured me, that they feel in them an attraction, which they do not find in the printed letters of any other man, ancient or modern. If it is possible to express by any single word the peculiarities of the writer, in which this attraction contsists, I apprehend they may be comprised in the word *delicacy;* and to render my meaning perfectly clear, I annex to that comprehensive word the following definition of it, as applied to language, which Dr. Lancaster introduced in his celebrated Essay on this enchanting quality of exquisite composition.

"Delicacy is good sense refined, which produces an inviolable attachment to decorum and

sanctity, as well as elegance of manners; with a clear discernment and warm sensibility of whatever is pure, regular and polite; and at the same time an abhorrence of whatever is gross, rustic or impure; of unnatural, effeminate, and over-wrought ornaments of every kind; it is, in short, the graceful, and the beautiful, added to the just and the good."

Such delicacy reigned in the mind and heart of Cowper, and has given to his letters a peculiar distinction.

THE

LIFE OF COWPER.

PART THE FIRST.

Ingenium probitas, artemque modestia vincit.

THE family of COWPER appears to have held, for several centuries, a respectable rank among the merchants and gentry of England. We learn from the life of the first Earl Cowper, in the Biographia Britannica, that his ancestors were inhabitants of Sussex, in the reign of Edward the fourth. The name is found repeatedly among the Sheriffs of London; and William Cowper, who resided as a country gentleman in Kent, was created a Baronet by King Charles the first, in 1641.* But the family rose to higher distinction

* This gentleman was a writer of English verse, and with rare munificence bestowed both an epitaph and a monument on that illustrious divine the venerable Hooker. In the edition of

in the beginning of the last century, by the remarkable circumstance of producing two brothers, who both obtained a seat in the House of Peers, by eminence in the profession of the law. William the

Walton's Lives, by Dr. Zouch, the curious reader may find the epitaph written by Sir William Cowper.

His descendant the poet of Weston, in speaking with moral pleasantry on the common pride of pedigree, expressed a persuasion that one of his progenitors migrated from Scotland in a very humble condition. Since the first publication of this Life, I chanced to find, in a scarce little book of biography, John Fuller's Abel Redivivus, quarto 1651, an account of a Scottish William Cowper, a religious author, so remarkable for the warmth of his piety, and the elegance of his language, that if his works had fallen into the hands of his namesake at Weston, the English poet might have felt a liberal satisfaction in supposing himself allied to the Scottish divine. The person to whom I allude, migrated indeed into England, and certainly in a humble state, according to his own account of his early life, in the following words: "Having passed my course in Saint Andrew's, I returned to my "parents in Edenborough. I was pressed by them to enter into "sundry sorts of life I liked not, for my heart still inclined to "the study of holy scriptures whereupon I resolved to go into "England, where I evidently perceived the Lord going before "me and providing for me at Hoddesden, within 18 miles of "London: my meane portion, which I had, being all spent (I "speak it to his glory that cared for me) in that same place, "that same day, was I desired by our kind countryman Master "Guthrie, to help him in the teaching of a school." The young enthusiastic pilgrim was at this time only sixteen. He afterwards studied theology under some learned divines in London, with the consent of his friend Guthrie. At the age of nineteen, he returned

eldest, became Lord High Chancellor in 1707. Spencer Cowper, the youngest, was appointed Chief Justice of Chester in 1717, and afterwards a Judge in the court of Common Pleas, being permitted by the particular favor of the king to hold those two offices to the end of his life. He died in Lincoln's

to Edinburgh; and in the course of a devout, active, and exemplary life, became Bishop of Galloway. He died as he had lived, eminent for the tranquil fervency of his faith. Ten years after his death, his collected works were published at London, in a neat and copious folio, 1629. They breathe a spirit of cordial piety; and, if we consider the time and country of the writer, the simplicity, and the strength of his style may be thought, peculiarly worthy of commendation. He introduces several of his religious treatises, with a variety of dedicatory epistles, which shew that his ardent devotion was united to great elegance of manners. He appears to have been familiar with many illustrious persons of his time; and there is a sonnet prefixed to his Commentary on the Revelation, by that admirable Scottish Poet, Drummond of Hawthornden, which, as it is omitted in the collected works of Drummond, printed in 1711, I should have inserted here, had I not seen it again in a recent and interesting publication, the Lives of the Scottish Poets, by Mr. David Irving. As the learned Bishop of Galloway addressed some of his compositions to King James the first, to his Queen, and to his son Prince Henry, it seems not improbable, that the person made a Baronet by Charles the first, might be related to this eloquent and highly esteemed Bishop Cowper; of whom I will only add, that he was buried in Edinburgh, his native city, 1619, and attended to the grave by the Earl of Dumfermeline, chancellor, with the lords of council &c. and honoured in a funeral sermon by the Archbishop of Saint Andrew's.

Inn, on the tenth of December, 1728; and has the higher claim to our notice, as the immediate ancestor of the poet. By his first wife, Judith Pennington (whose exemplary character is still revered by her descendants) Judge Cowper left several children; among them a daughter Judith, who at the age of eighteen discovered a striking talent for poetry, in the praise of her contemporary poets, Pope and Hughes. This lady, the wife of Colonel Madan, transmitted her own poetical and devout spirit to her daughter Frances Maria, who was married to her cousin Major Cowper; the amiable character of Maria will unfold itself in the course of this work, as the friend and correspondent of her more eminent relation, the *second* grandchild of the Judge destined to honor the name of Cowper by displaying, with peculiar purity and fervour, the double enthusiasm of poetry and devotion. The father of the great author to whom I allude, was John Cowper, the Judge's second son, who took his degrees in divinity, was Chaplain to King George the second, and resided at his rectory of Great Berkhampstead, in Hertfordshire, the scene of the poet's infancy, which he has thus commemorated, in a singularly beautiful and pathetic composition on the portrait of his mother.

Where once we dwelt, our name is heard no more;
Children not thine, have trod my nurs'ry floor;
And where the gard'ner Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school, along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapt
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet-capt;
'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we called the past'ral house our own.
Short-lived possession! but the record fair
That memory keeps of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm, that has effac'd
A thousand other themes less deeply trac'd.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou might'st know me safe, and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestow'd
By thy own hand, 'till fresh they shone and glow'd;
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and breaks,
That humour interposed too often makes:
All this, still legible, in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honors to thee, as my numbers may.

The parent, whose merits are so feelingly recorded by the filial tenderness of the poet, was Ann

daughter of Roger Donne, Esq. of Ludham Hall, in Norfolk. This lady, whose family is said to have been originally from Wales, was married in the bloom of youth to Dr. Cowper. After giving birth to several children, who died in their infancy, and leaving two sons, William, the immediate subject of this memorial, born at Berkhampsted on the twenty-sixth of November, N. S. 1731, and John (whose accomplishments and memorable death will be described in the course of this compilation) she died in childbed, at the early age of thirty-four, in 1737. It may be wished, that the painter, employed to preserve a resemblance of such a woman, had possessed those powers of graceful and perfect delineation, which, in a different art, belonged to the pen of her son; but her portrait, executed by Heins in oil colours, on a small scale, is a production infinitely inferior to the very beautiful poem to which it gave rise. Those who delight in contemplating the best affections of our nature, will ever admire the tender sensibility, with which the poet has acknowledged his obligations to this amiable mother, in a poem composed more than fifty years after her decease. Readers of this description may find a pleasure in observing how the praise so liberally bestowed on this tender

parent, at so late a period, is confirmed (if praise so unquestionable may be said to receive confirmation) by another poetical record of her merit, which the hand of affinity and affection bestowed upon her tomb. A record written at a time, when the poet who was destined to prove, in his advanced life, her most powerful eulogist, had hardly begun to shew the dawn of that genius, which after many years of silent affliction, arose like a star emerging from tempestuous darkness.

The monument of Mrs. Cowper, erected by her husband in the chancel of St. Peter's church at Berkhamstead, contains the following verses, composed by a young lady, her niece, the late Lady Walsingham.

Here lies, in early years bereft of life,
The best of mothers, and the kindest wife.
Who neither knew, nor practic'd any art,
Secure in all she wish'd, her husband's heart.
Her love to him, still prevalent in death,
Pray'd Heav'n to bless him with her latest breath.
Still was she studious never to offend,
And glad of an occasion to commend:
With ease would pardon injuries receiv'd,
Nor e'er was cheerful, when another griev'd.

Despising state, with her own lot content,
Enjoy'd the comforts of a life well spent.
Resign'd, when Heaven demanded back her breath,
Her mind heroic 'midst the pangs of death.
Whoe'er thou art that dost this tomb draw near,
O stay awhile, and shed a friendly tear;
These lines tho' weak, are as herself sincere.

The truth and tenderness of this epitaph will more than compensate with every candid reader the imperfection ascribed to it by its young and modest author.—To have lost a parent of a character so virtuous and endearing, at an early period of his childhood, was the prime misfortune of Cowper, and what contributed perhaps in the highest degree to the dark colouring of his subsequent life. The influence of a good mother on the first years of her children, whether nature has given them peculiar strength or peculiar delicacy of frame, is equally inestimable: it is the prerogative and the felicity of such a mother to temper the arrogance of the strong, and to dissipate the timidity of the tender. The infancy of Cowper was delicate in no common degree; and his constitution discovered at a very early season that morbid tendency to diffidence, to melancholy, and despair, which darkened, as he advanced in years, into periodical fits of the most deplorable depression.

It may afford an ample field for useful reflection, to observe, in speaking of a child, that he was destined to excite in his progress through life, the highest degrees of admiration, and of pity—of admiration for mental excellence, and of pity for mental disorder.

We understand human nature too imperfectly, to ascertain in what measure the original structure of his frame, and the casual incidents of his life, contributed to the happy perfection of his genius, or to the calamitous eclipses of his effulgent mind. Yet such were the talents, the virtues, and the misfortunes of this wonderful person, that it is hardly possible for Biography, extensive as her province is, to speak of a more interesting individual, or to select a subject, on which it may be more difficult to satisfy a variety of readers. In feeling all the weight of this difficulty, I may still be confident, that I shall not utterly disappoint his sincerest admirers, if the success of my endeavours to make him more known, and more beloved, is proportioned, in any degree, to the zeal, with which I cultivated his friendship, and to the gratification, that I feel, in recalling to my own recollection, the delightful extent and

diversity of his literary powers, with the equally delightful sweetness of his social character.

But the powerful influence of such recollection has drawn me imperceptibly, from the proper course of my narrative—I return to the childhood of Cowper. In first quitting the house of his parents, he was sent to a reputable school at Market-street in Hertfordshire, under the care of Dr. Pitman; and it is probable that he was removed from it in consequence of an ocular complaint. From a circumstance, which he relates of himself at that period, in a letter written to me in 1792, he seems to have been in danger of resembling Milton in the misfortune of blindness, as he resembled him, more happily, in the fervency of a devout and poetical spirit.

"I have been all my life, says Cowper, sub-
"ject to inflammations of the eye, and in my boyish
"days had specks on both, that threatened to cover
"them. My father, alarmed for the consequences,
"sent me to a female oculist of great renown at that
"time, in whose house I abode two years, but to
"no good purpose. From her I went to Westmin-
"ster school, where, at the age of fourteen, the
"small-pox seized me, and proved the better oculist
"of the two, for it delivered me from them all: not

" however from great liableness to inflammation; to " which I am in a degree still subject, tho' much " less than formerly, since I have been constant in " the use of a hot foot-bath every night, the last " thing before going to rest."

It appears a strange process in education, to send a tender child, from a long residence in the house of a female oculist, immediately into all the hardships that a little delicate boy must have to encounter at a public school. But the mother of Cowper was dead; and fathers, though good men, are, in general, utterly unfit to manage their young and tender orphans. The little Cowper was sent to his first school in the year of his mother's death; and how ill suited the scene was to his peculiar character, must be evident to all, who have heard him describe his sensations in that season of life, which is often, very erroneously, extolled as the happiest period of human existence. He has been frequently heard to lament the persecution he sustained in his childish years, from the cruelty of his school-fellows, in the two scenes of his education. His own forcible expression, represented him, at Westminster, as not daring to raise his eye above the shoe-buck'e of the elder boys, who were too apt to tyrannise over

his gentle spirit. The acuteness of his feelings in his childhood, rendered those important years (which might have produced, under tender cultivation, a series of lively enjoyments) miserable years of increasing timidity and depression; which in the most cheerful hours of his advanced life, he could hardly describe, to an intimate friend, without shuddering at the recollection of his early wretchedness. Yet to this perhaps the world is indebted for the pathetic and moral eloquence of those forcible admonitions to parents, which give interest and beauty to his admirable poem on public schools. Poets may be said to realize, in some measure, the poetical idea of the nightingale's singing with a thorn at her breast; as their most exquisite songs have often originated in the acuteness of their personal sufferings. Of this obvious truth, the poem I have just mentioned, is a very memorable example; and if any readers have thought the poet too severe in his strictures on that system of education, to which we owe some of the most accomplished characters that ever gave celebrity to a civilized nation, such readers will be candidly reconciled to that moral severity of reproof, in recollecting, that it flowed from

severe personal experience, united to the purest spirit of philanthropy and patriotism.

Cowper's exhortation to fathers, to educate their own sons, is a model of persuasive eloquence, and not inferior to similar exhortations in the eloquent Rousseau, or in the accomplished translator of Tansillo's poem, *The Nurse;* by which these enchanting writers have induced, and will continue to induce, so many mothers in polished life to suckle their own children. Yet similar as these exhortations may be esteemed, in their benevolent design, and in their graceful expression, there are two powerful reasons, which must in all probability, prevent their being attended with similar success. In the first place, woman has, in general, much stronger propensity than man to the perfect discharge of parental duties; and secondly, the avocations of men are so imperious, in their different lines of life, that few fathers could command sufficient leisure (if nature furnished them with talents and inclination) to fulfil the arduous office of preceptor to their own children; yet, arduous and irksome as the office is generally thought, there is perhaps no species of mental labour so perfectly sweet in its success; and the poet justly exclaims:

O tis a sight to be with joy perus'd,

. . . . . .

A sight surpass'd by none, that we can shew ?

. . . . . .

A father blest with an ingenuous son,
Father and friend, and tutor, all in one.

Had the constitutional shyness and timidity of Cowper been gradually dispelled by the rare advantage that he describes in these verses, his early years would certainly have been happier; but men, who are partial to public schools, will probably doubt, if any system of private tuition could have proved more favorable to the future display of his genius, than such an education as he received at Westminster. There, indeed, the peculiar delicacy of his nature, might expose him to an extraordinary portion of juvenile discomfort; yet he undoubtedly acquired the accomplishment, and the reputation of scholarship; with the advantage of being known and esteemed by some aspiring youths of his own age, who were destined to become conspicuous, and powerful, in the splendid scenes of the world.

With these acquisitions, he left Westminster at the age of eighteen, in 1749; and as if destiny had determined, that all his early situations in life should be peculiarly irksome to his delicate feelings,

and tend rather to promote, than to counteract, his constitutional tendency to melancholy, he was removed from a public school to the office of an attorney. He resided three years in the house of a Mr. Chapman, to whom he was engaged by articles for that time. Here he was placed for the study of a profession, which nature seemed resolved, that he never should practise.

The law is a kind of soldiership, and like the profession of arms, it may be said to require for the constitution of its heroes

"A frame of adamant, a soul of fire."

The soul of Cowper had indeed its fire, but fire so refined and ætherial, that it could not be expected to shine in the gross atmosphere of worldly contention. Perhaps there never existed a mortal, who possessing with a good person, intellectual powers naturally strong, and highly cultivated, was so utterly unfit to encounter the bustle and perplexities of public life. But the extreme modesty and shyness of his nature, which disqualified him for scenes of business and ambition, endeared him inexpressibly to those, who had opportunities to enjoy his society, and faculties to appreciate the uncommon excellence of his character.

Reserved as he was, to an extraordinary and painful degree, his heart and mind were yet admirably fashioned by nature for all the refined intercourse, and confidential delights, both of friendship and love: but though apparently formed to possess and to communicate, an extraordinary portion of felicity, the incidents of his life were such, that, conspiring with the peculiarities of his nature, they rendered him, at different times, the most unhappy of mankind. The variety and depth of his sufferings, in early life, from extreme tenderness of heart, are very forcibly displayed in the following verses, which formed part of a letter to one of his female relations, at the time they were composed. The letter has perished, and the verses owe their preservation to the affectionate memory of the lady, to whom they were addressed.

Doom'd, as I am, in solitude to waste
The present moments, and regret the past;
Depriv'd of every joy I valued most,
My friend torn from me, and my mistress lost;
Call not this gloom I wear, this anxious mien,
The dull effect of humour, or of spleen!
Still, still, I mourn, with each returning day,
Him* snatch'd, by fate, in early youth away;

* Sir William Russel, the favorite friend of the young poet.

And her—thro' tedious years of doubt and pain,
Fix'd in her choice, and faithful—but in vain,
O prone to pity, generous, and sincere,
Whose eye ne'er yet refus'd the wretch a tear;
Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows,
Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes;
See me—ere yet my destin'd course half done,
Cast forth a wand'rer on a wild unknown!
See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
Each dear companion of my voyage lost!
Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow,
And ready tears wait only leave to flow!
Why all that soothes a heart from anguish free,
All that delights the happy—palls with me!

When he quitted the house of the solicitor, where he was placed to acquire the rudiments of litigation, he settled himself in chambers of the Inner-Temple, as a regular student of law; but although he resided there to the age of thirty-three, he rambled (according to his own colloquial account of his early years) from the thorny road of his austere patroness, Jurisprudence, into the primrose paths of literature and poetry. Even here his native diffidence confined him to social and subordinate exertions. He wrote, and printed both verse and prose, as the concealed assistant of less diffident authors,

During his residence in the Temple, he cultivated the friendship of some eminent literary characters, who had been his school-fellows at Westminster; particularly Colman, Bonnel Thornton, and Lloyd. His regard to the two former induced him to contribute to their periodical publication, entitled the Connoisseur, three excellent papers, which the reader will find in the Appendix to these volumes, and from which he will perceive, that Cowper had such talents for this pleasant and useful species of composition, as might have rendered him a worthy associate, in such labours, to Addison himself, whose graceful powers have never been surpassed in that province of literature, which may still be considered as peculiarly his own.

The intimacy of Cowper and Lloyd may have given rise perhaps to some early productions of our poet, which it may now be hardly possible to ascertain; the probability of this conjecture arises from the necessities of Lloyd, and the affectionate liberality of his friend. As the former was tempted by his narrow finances to engage in periodical works, it is highly probable that the pen of Cowper, ever ready to second the charitable wishes of his heart, might be devoted to the service of an indigent au-

thor, whom he appears to have loved with a very cordial affection. I find that affection agreeably displayed in a sportive poetical epistle, which may claim a place in this volume, not only as an early specimen of Cowper's poetry, but as exhibiting a sketch of his own mind at the age of twenty-three.

AN EPISTLE

To ROBERT LLOYD, Esq.

1754.

'Tis not that I design to rob
Thee of thy birth-right, gentle Bob,
For thou art born sole heir, and single,
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle;
Nor that I mean, while thus I knit
My thread-bare sentiments together,
To shew my genius, or my wit,
When God and you know, I have neither;
Or such, as might be better shewn
By letting poetry alone.
'Tis not with either of these views,
That I presume t' address the Muse:
But to divert a fierce banditti,
(Sworn foes to every thing that's witty!)

That, with a black, infernal train,
Make cruel inroads in my brain,
And daily threaten to drive thence
My little garrison of sense:
The fierce banditti, which I mean,
Are gloomy thoughts, led on by spleen.
Then there's another reason yet,
Which is, that I may fairly quit
The debt, which justly became due
The moment, when I heard from you:
And you might grumble, crony mine,
If paid in any other coin;
Since twenty sheets of lead, God knows,
(I would say twenty sheets of prose,)
Can ne'er be deem'd worth half so much
As one of gold, and yours was such.
Thus, the preliminaries settled,
I fairly find myself *pitch-kettled*;*
And cannot see, tho' few see better,
How I shall hammer out a letter.
First, for a thought---since all agree---
A thought---I have it---let me see---
'Tis gone again---plague on't! I thought
I had it---but I have it not.

* Pitch-kettled, a favorite phrase at the time when this Epistle was written, expressive of being puzzled, or what in the Spectator's time, would have been called *bamboozled*.

Dame Gurton thus, and Hodge her son,
That useful thing, her needle, gone!
Rake well the cinders;---sweep the floor,
And sift the dust behind the door;
While eager Hodge beholds the prize
In old grimalkin's glaring eyes;
And gammer finds it on her knees
In every shining straw she sees.
This simile were apt enough;
But I've another, critic-proof!
The virtuoso thus, at noon,
Broiling beneath a July sun,
The gilded butterfly pursues,
O'er hedge and ditch, thro' gaps and mews;
And after many a vain essay,
To captivate the tempting prey,
Gives him at length the lucky pat,
And has him safe beneath his hat:
Then lifts it gently from the ground;
But ah! 'tis lost as soon as found;
Culprit his liberty regains;
Flits out of sight, and mocks his pains.
The sense was dark; 'twas therefore fit
With simile t' illustrate it;
But as too much obscures the sight,
As often as too little light,
We have our similes cut short,
For matters of more grave import.

That Matthew's numbers run with ease
Each man of common sense agrees;
All men of common sense allow,
That Robert's lines are easy too:
Where then the pref'rence shall we place,
Or how do justice in this case?
Matthew (says fame) with endless pains,
Smooth'd and refin'd the meanest strains;
Nor suffer'd one ill-chosen rhyme
T' escape him at the idlest time;
And thus o'er all a lustre cast,
That, while the language lives, shall last.
An't please your ladyship, (quoth I,)
For 'tis my business to reply;
Sure so much labour, so much toil,
Bespeak at least a stubborn soil:
Theirs be the laurel-wreath decreed,
Who both write well, and write full speed!
Who throw their Helicon about
As freely as a conduit spout!
Friend Robert, thus like *chien scavant*,
Lets fall a poem *en passant*,
Nor needs his genuine ore refine;
'Tis ready polish'd from the mine.

It may be proper to observe, that this lively praise on the playful talents of Lloyd, was written six years before that amiable, but unfortunate, author published the best of his serious poems, "*The Actor*," a composition of considerable merit. It proved a prelude to the more powerful, and popular, Rosciad of Churchill; who, after surpassing Lloyd as a rival, assisted him very liberally as a friend. While Cowper resided in the Temple, he seems to have been personally acquainted with the most eminent writers of the time; and the interest, which he probably took in their recent works, tended to increase his powerful, though diffident, passion for poetry; and to train him imperceptibly to that masterly command of language, which he displayed, almost as a new talent, at the age of fifty. One of his first associates has informed me, that before he quitted London, he frequently amused himself in translating from antient and modern poets, and devoted his composition to the service of any friend who requested it. In a copy of Duncombe's Horace, printed in 1759, I find two of the Satires translated by Cowper. The Duncombes, father and son, were amiable scholars, of a Hertford-

shire family; and the elder Duncombe, in his printed letters, mentions Dr. Cowper (the father of the poet) as one of his friends, who possessed a talent for poetry, exhibiting at the same time a respectable specimen of his verse. The Duncombes, in the preface to their Horace, impute the size of their work to the poetical contributions of their friends. At what time, the two Satires I have mentioned were translated by William Cowper, I have not been able to ascertain; but they are worthy of his pen, and will therefore appear in the Appendix to these volumes.

Speaking of his own early life, in a letter to Mr. Park, (dated March, 1792,) Cowper says, with that extreme modesty, which was one of his most remarkable characteristics: "From the age of "twenty to thirty-three I was occupied, or ought "to have been, in the study of the law; from "thirty-three to sixty, I have spent my time in the "country, where my reading has been only an "apology for idleness; and where, when I had not "either a magazine, or a review, I was sometimes "a carpenter, at others, a bird-cage-maker, or a "gardener, or a drawer of landscapes. At fifty "years of age I commenced author:—it is

" whim, that has served me longest, and best, and " will probably be my last."

Lightly as this unassuming poet has spoken of his own exertions, and late as he appeared to himself in producing his chief poetical works, he had received from nature a contemplative spirit, perpetually acquiring a store of mental treasure, which he at last unveiled, to delight and astonish the world with its unexpected magnificence. Even his juvenile verses discover a mind deeply impressed with sentiments of piety; and in proof of this assertion, I select a few stanzas from an Ode, written, when he was very young, on reading Sir Charles Grandison.

To rescue from the tyrant's sword
Th' oppress'd;---unseen and unimplor'd,
To chear the face of woe;
From lawless insult to defend
An orphan's right---a fallen friend,
And a forgiven foe;

These, these, distinguish from the crowd,
And these alone, the great and good,
The guardians of mankind;
Whose bosoms with these virtues heave,
O, with what matchless speed, they leave
The multitude behind!

Then ask ye, from what cause on earth
Virtues like these derive their birth?
Deriv'd from Heaven alone:
Fall on that favour'd breast they shine,
Where faith and resignation join
To call the blessing down.

Such is that heart:---but while the Muse
Thy theme, O RICHARDSON, pursues,
Her feeble spirits faint:
She cannot reach, and would not wrong,
That subject for an Angel's song,
The Hero, and the Saint!

His early turn to moralize, on the slightest occasion, will appear from the following Verses, which he wrote at the age of eighteen; and in which those who love to trace the rise and progress of genius, will, I think, be pleased to remark the very promising seeds of those peculiar powers, which unfolded themselves in the richest maturity at a distant period, and rendered that beautiful and sublime poem, *The Task*, the most instructive and interesting of modern compositions. Young as the poet was, when he produced the following lines, we may observe, that he had probably been fou-

years in the habit of writing English verse; as he has said in one of his letters, that he began his poetical career at the age of fourteen, by translating an Elegy of Tibullus. I have reason to believe that he wrote many poems in early life; and the singular merit of this juvenile composition, is sufficient to make the friends of genius regret, that an excess of diffidence prevented him from preserving the poetry of his youth.

VERSES

WRITTEN AT BATH, ON FINDING THE HEEL OF A SHOE, IN 1748.

Fortune! I thank thee: gentle Goddess! thanks!
Not that my Muse, tho' bashful, shall deny,
She would have thank'd thee rather, hadst thou cast
A treasure in her way; for neither meed
Of early breakfast, to dispel the fumes,
And bowel-racking pains of emptiness,
Nor noon-tide feast, nor evening's cool repast,
Hopes she from this---presumptuous, tho', perhaps,
The cobler, leather-carving artist! might.
Nathless she thanks thee, and accepts thy boon,
Whatever; not as erst the fabled cock,

21309

Vain glorious fool! unknowing what he found,
Spurn'd the rich gem, thou gav'st him. Wherefore ah!
Why not on me that favour, (worthier sure!)
Conferr'dst thou, Goddess! Thou art blind, thou say'st:
Enough!---thy blindness shall excuse the deed.
Nor does my Muse no benefit exhale
From this thy scant indulgence!---even here,
Hints, worthy sage philosophy, are found;
Illustrious hints, to moralize my song!
This pond'rous heel of perforated hide
Compact, with pegs indented, many a row,
Haply, (for such its massy form bespeaks,)
The weighty tread of some rude peasant clown
Upbore: on this supported oft, he stretch'd,
With uncouth strides, along the furrow'd glebe,
Flatt'ning the stubborn clod, 'til cruel time,
(What will not cruel time) on a wry step,
Sever'd the strict cohesion; when, alas!
He, who could erst, with even, equal pace,
Pursue his destin'd way with symmetry,
And some proportion form'd, now, on one side,
Curtail'd and maim'd, the sport of vagrant boys,
Cursing his frail supporter, treacherous prop!
With toilsome steps, and difficult, moves on:
Thus fares it oft with other than the feet
Of humble villager---the statesman thus,
Up the steep road, where proud ambition leads,
Aspiring, first uninterrupted winds
His prosp'rous way; nor fears miscarriage foul,

While policy prevails, and friends prove true:
But that support soon failing, by him left,
On whom he most depended, basely left,
Betray'd, deserted; from his airy height
Head-long he falls; and thro' the rest of life,
Drags the dull load of disappointment on.

Of a youth, who, in a scene like Bath, could produce such a meditation, it might fairly be expected, that he would,

"In riper life, exempt from public haunt,
"Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
"Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

These few words of Shakespear have often appeared to me as an absolute portrait of Cowper, in those quiet and cheerful days when he exercised, and enjoyed, his rare poetical powers in privacy, at the pleasant village of Weston. But before we contemplate the poetical recluse in that scene, it is the duty of his Biographer to relate some painful incidents, that led him, by extraordinary steps, to his favorite retreat.

Though extreme diffidence, and a tendency to despond, seemed early to preclude Cowper from all

expectation of climbing to the splendid summit of the profession he had chosen; yet, by the interest of his family, he had prospects of emolument in a line of life, that appeared better suited to the modesty of his nature, and to his moderate ambition.

In his thirty-first year, he was nominated to the offices of Reading Clerk, and Clerk of the Private Committees, in the House of Lords. A situation the more desirable, as such an establishment might enable him to marry early in life; a measure, to which he was doubly disposed, by judgment and inclination. But the peculiarities of his wonderful mind rendered him unable to support the ordinary duties of his new office; for the idea of reading in public, proved a source of torture to his tender, and apprehensive spirit. An expedient was devised to promote his interest, without wounding his feelings. Resigning his situation of Reading Clerk, he was appointed Clerk of the Journals, in the same House of Parliament. Of his occupation in consequence of this new appointment, he speaks, in the following letter, to a lady, who will become known and endeared to my readers, in proportion to the interest they take in the writings of Cowper.

LETTER I.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Temple, August 9, 1763.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Having promised to write to you, I make haste to be as good as my word. I have a pleasure in writing to you at any time, but especially at the present, when my days are spent in reading the Journals, and my nights in dreaming of them. An employment not very agreeable to a head that has long been habituated to the luxury of chusing its subject, and has been as little employed upon business, as if it had grown upon the shoulders of a much wealthier gentleman. But the numscull pays for it now, and will not presently forget the discipline, it has undergone lately. If I succeed in this doubtful piece of promotion, I shall have at least this satisfaction to reflect upon, that the volumes I write will be treasured up with the utmost care for ages, and will last as long as the English constitution. A duration which ought to satisfy the vanity of any author, who has a spark of love for his country. Oh my good Cousin! if I was to

open my heart to you, I could shew you strange sights; nothing I flatter myself that would shock you, but a great deal that would make you wonder. I am of a very singular temper, and very unlike all the men that I have ever conversed with. Certainly I am not an absolute fool; but I have more weakness than the greatest of all the fools I can recollect at present. In short, if I was as fit for the next world, as I am unfit for this, and God forbid I should speak it in vanity, I would not change conditions with any saint in Christendom.

My destination is settled at last, and I have obtained a furlough. Margate is the word, and what do you think will ensue, Cousin? I know what you expect, but ever since I was born I have been good at disappointing the most natural expectations. Many years ago, Cousin, there was a possibility that I might prove a very different thing from what I am at present. My character is now fixt, and riveted fast upon me; and between friends, is not a very splendid one, or likely to be guilty of much fascination.

Adieu, my dear Cousin! So much as I love you, I wonder how the deuce it has happened I was never in love with you. Thank Heaven that I never

was, for at this time I have had a pleasure in writing to you, which in that case I should have forfeited. Let me hear from you, or I shall reap but half the reward that is due to my noble indifference.

Yours ever, and evermore,

W. C.

It was hoped from the change of his station that his personal appearance in Parliament might not be required; but a parliamentary dispute made it necessary for him to appear at the Bar of the House of Lords, to intitle himself publicly to the office.

Speaking of this important incident in a sketch, which he once formed himself, of passages in his early life, he expresses, what he endured at the time, in these remarkable words: "They, whose "spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public "exhibition of themselves is mortal poison, may "have some idea of the horrors of my situation— "others can have none."

His terrors on this occasion arose to such an astonishing height, that they utterly overwhelmed his reason: for although he had endeavoured to prepare himself for his public duty, by attending closely

at the office for several months, to examine the parliamentary journals, his application was rendered useless, by that excess of diffidence, which made him conceive, that, whatever knowledge he might previously acquire, it would all forsake him at the bar of the house. This distressing apprehension encreased to such a degree, as the time for his appearance approached, that when the day, so anxiously dreaded, arrived, he was unable to make the experiment. The very friends who called on him for the purpose of attending him to the House of Lords, acquiesced in the cruel necessity of his relinquishing the prospect of a station, so severely formidable to a frame of such singular sensibility.

The conflict between the wishes of his just ambition, and the terrors of diffidence, so entirely overwhelmed his health and faculties, that after two learned and benevolent divines (Mr. John Cowper, his brother, and the celebrated Mr. Martin Madan, his first cousin,) had vainly endeavoured to establish a lasting tranquillity in his mind, by friendly and religious conversation, it was found necessary to remove him to St. Alban's. He resided there a considerable time, under the care of that eminent physician, Dr. Cotton, a scholar, and a poet, who

added to many accomplishments, a peculiar sweetness of manners, in very advanced life, when I had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with him.

The misfortune of mental derangement is a topic of such awful delicacy, that I consider it as the duty of a biographer rather to sink, in tender silence, than to proclaim, with circumstantial, and offensive, temerity, the minute particulars of a calamity, to which all human beings are exposed, and perhaps in proportion as they have received, from nature, those delightful, but dangerous gifts, a heart of exquisite tenderness, and a mind of creative energy.

This is a sight for pity to peruse,
'Till she resembles, faintly, what she views;
'Till sympathy contracts a kindred pain,
Pierc'd with the woes, that she laments in vain.
This, of all maladies, that man infest,
Claims most compassion, and receives the least.
.....
.....
But with a soul, that ever felt the sting
Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing.
.....
.....

'Tis not, as heads that never ache, suppose,
Forg'ry of fancy, and a dream of woes.
Man is a harp, whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony, dispos'd aright;
The screws revers'd (a task, which, if He please,
God, in a moment, executes with ease;)
Ten thousand, thousand, strings at once go loose;
Lost, 'til He tune them, all their pow'r and use.
.....
No wounds like those, a wounded spirit feels;
No cure for such, 'till God, who makes them, heals.
And thou, sad sufferer, under nameless ill,
That yields not to the touch of human skill,
Improve the kind occasion, understand
A Father's frown, and kiss the chast'ning hand!

It is in this awful, and instructive light, that Cowper himself teaches us to consider the calamity of which I am now speaking; and of which he, like his illustrious brother of Parnassus, the younger Tasso, was occasionally a most affecting example. Heaven appears to have given a striking lesson to mankind, to guard both virtue, and genius, against pride of heart, and pride of intellect, by thus suspending the affections, and the talents, of two most tender and sublime poets, who, in the purity of their lives, and in the splendour of their intellectual

powers, will be ever deservedly reckoned among the pre-eminent of the earth.

From December 1763, to the following July, the mind of Cowper appears to have laboured under the severest sufferings of morbid depression; but the medical skill of Dr. Cotton, and the cheerful, benignant manners of that accomplished physician, gradually succeeded, with the blessing of Heaven, in removing the undescribable load of religious despondency, which had clouded the admirable faculties of this innocent, and upright man. His ideas of religion were changed from the gloom of terror and despair, to the lustre of comfort and delight.

This juster and happier view of Evangelical truth, is said to have arisen in his mind while he was reading the third chapter of Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Devout contemplation became more and more dear to his reviving spirit; resolving to relinquish all thoughts of a laborious profession, and all intercourse with the busy world, he acquiesced in a plan of settling at Huntingdon, by the advice of his brother, who, as a minister of the Gospel, and a fellow of Bennet college, in Cambridge, resided in

that university; a situation so near to the place chosen for Cowper's retirement, that it afforded to these affectionate brothers opportunities of easy and frequent intercourse. I regret that all the letters which passed between them have perished; and the more so, as they sometimes corresponded in verse. John Cowper was also a poet. He had engaged to execute a translation of Voltaire's Henriade; and in the course of the work, requested and obtained the assistance of William, who translated, as he informed me himself, two entire cantos of the poem. This fraternal production is said to have appeared in a magazine of the year 1759. I have discovered a rival, and probably an inferior translation, so published; but the joint work of the poetical brothers has hitherto eluded all my researches.

In June 1765, the reviving invalide removed to a private lodging in the town of Huntingdon; but Providence soon introduced him into a family, which afforded him one of the most singular, and valuable friends, that ever watched an afflicted mortal in seasons of overwhelming adversity; that friend, to whom the poet exclaims, in the commencement of *The Task;*

And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm, this twentieth winter, I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine, with pleasure, such as love
Confirmed by long experience of thy worth,
And well tried virtues, could alone inspire:
Witness a joy, that thou hast doubled long!
Thou know'st my praise of nature most sincere
And that my raptures are not conjur'd up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.

These verses would be alone sufficient to make every poetical reader take a lively interest in the lady they describe; but these are far from being the only tribute, which the gratitude of Cowper has paid to the endearing virtues of his female companion. More poetical memorials of her merit will be found in these volumes, and in verse so exquisite, that it may be questioned, if the most passionate love ever gave rise to poetry more tender, or more sublime.

Yet, in this place, it appears proper to apprize the reader, that it was not love, in the common acceptation of the word, which inspired these admirable eulogies. The attachment of Cowper to Mrs. Unwin, the Mary of the poet! was an attachment perhaps unparalleled. Their domestic union, though not sanctioned by the common forms of life,

was supported with perfect innocence, and endeared to them both, by their having struggled together through a series of sorrow. A spectator of sensibility, who had contemplated the uncommon tenderness of their attention to the wants and infirmities of each other in the decline of life, might have said, of their singular attachment:

L' Amour n' a rien de si tendre,
Ni L' Amitiè de si doux.

As a connexion so extraordinary forms a striking feature in the history of the poet, the reader will probably be anxious to investigate its origin and progress.—It arose from the following little incident:

The countenance and deportment of Cowper, though they indicated his native shyness, had yet very singular powers of attraction. On his first appearance in one of the churches at Huntingdon, he engaged the notice and respect of an amiable young man, William Cawthorne Unwin, then a student at Cambridge, who having observed, after divine service, that the interesting stranger was taking a solitary turn under a row of trees, was irresistibly led to share his walk, and to solicit his acquaintance.

They were soon pleased with each other, and the intelligent youth, charmed with the acquisition of such a friend, was eager to communicate the treasure to his parents, who had long resided in Huntingdon.

Mr. Unwin, the father, had for some years been master of a free-school in the town; but, as he advanced in life, he quitted that laborious situation, and, settling in a large convenient house in the high-street, contented himself with a few domestic pupils, whom he instructed in classical literature.

This worthy divine, who was now far advanced in years, had been Lecturer to the two churches at Huntingdon, before he obtained, from his college at Cambridge, the living of Grimston. While he lived in expectation of this preferment, he had attached himself to a young lady of lively talents, and remarkably fond of reading. This lady, who, in the process of time, and by a series of singular events, became the friend and guardian of Cowper, was the daughter of Mr. Cawthorne, a draper, in Ely. She was married to Mr. Unwin on his succeeding to the preferment, that he expected from his college, and settled with him on his living

of Grimston; but not liking the situation and society of that sequestered scene, she prevailed on her husband to establish himself in Huntingdon, where he was known and respected.

They had resided there many years, and with their two only children, a son and a daughter (whom I remember to have noticed at Cambridge, in the year 1763, as a youth and a damsel of countenances uncommonly pleasing) they formed a cheerful and social family, when the younger Unwin, described by Cowper as

> "A friend,
> Whose worth deserves the warmest lay,
> That ever friendship penn'd;"

presented to his parents the solitary stranger, on whose retirement he had benevolently intruded, and whose welfare he became more and more anxious to promote. An event highly pleasing and comfortable to Cowper soon followed this introduction; he was affectionately solicited by all the Unwins to relinquish his lonely lodging, and become a part of their family.

I am now arrived at that period in the personal history of my friend, when I am fortunately enabled to employ his own descriptive powers in

recording the events and characters that particularly interested him, and in displaying the state of his mind at a remarkable season of his chequered life. I have selected the following among the earliest letters of this affectionate writer, with which time and chance, with the kindness of his friends and relations, have afforded me the advantage of adorning this work. Those addressed to the Lady Hesketh, from Huntingdon, had not been discovered, when the commencement of this compilation was first printed. Now as her tenderness to her illustrious, though unhappy, relation, has been exemplary, through every period of his changeful life, I take a pleasure in giving a new arrangement to the series of his letters, because it assigns to this lady her proper place of pre-eminence as an early friend of the poet.

Among his juvenile intimates, and correspondents, he particularly regarded two gentlemen, who devoted themselves to different branches of the law, the late Lord Thurlow, and Joseph Hill, Esq. whose name appears in the second volume of Cowper's Poems, prefixed to a few verses of exquisite beauty; a brief epistle, that seems to have more of the gene-

ine ease, spirit, and moral gaity of Horace, than any original epistle in the English language! From these two confidential associates of the poet, in his unclouded years, I expected materials for the display of his early genius; but in the torrent of busy and splendid life, which bore the first of them to a mighty distance from his less ambitious fellow-student of the Temple, the private letters, and verses, that arose from their youthful intimacy, have perished.

Mr. Hill has kindly favored me with a very copious collection of Cowper's letters to himself, through a long period of time, and although many of them are of a nature not suited to publication, yet many others will illustrate and embellish these volumes. The steadiness and integrity of Mr. Hill's regard for a person so much sequestered from his sight, gives him a particular title to be distinguished among those, whom Cowper has honored by addressing to them his highly interesting and affectionate letters. Many of these, which I shall occasionally introduce in the parts of the narrative to which they belong, may tend to confirm a truth, not unpleasing to the majority of readers, that the

temperate zone of moderate fortune, equally removed from high, and low life, is most favorable to the permanence of friendship.

LETTER II.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Huntingdon, June 24, 1765.

DEAR JOE.

The only recompence I can make you for your kind attention to my affairs, during my illnes, is to tell you, that, by the mercy of God, I am restored to perfect health, both of mind and body. This, I believe, will give you pleasure, and I would gladly do any thing from which you could receive it.

I left St. Alban's on the seventeenth, and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time there with my brother, and came hither on the twenty-second. I have a lodging that puts me continually in mind of our summer excursions; we have had many worse, and except the size of it (which how-

ever is sufficient for a single man) but few better. I am not quite alone, having brought a servant with me from St. Alban's, who is the very mirror of fidelity and affection for his master. And whereas the Turkish Spy says, he kept no servant, because he would not have an enemy in his house, I hired mine, because I would have a friend. Men do not usually bestow these encomiums on their lackeys, nor do they usually deserve them, but I have had experience of mine, both in sickness and in health, and never saw his fellow.

The river Ouse, I forget how they spell it, is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world; at this town, it is I believe as wide as the Thames at Windsor; nor does the silver Thames better deserve that epithet, nor has it more flowers upon its banks, these being attributes which, in strict truth, belong to neither. Fluellin would say, they are as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is salmon in both. It is a noble stream to bathe in, and I shall make that use of it three times a week, having introduced myself to it for the first time this morning.

I beg you will remember me to all my friends, which is a task will cost you no great pains to exe-

cute—particularly remember me to those of your own house, and believe me

Your very affectionate

W. C.

LETTER III.

To Lady HESKETH.

Huntingdon, July 1, 1765.

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,

Since the visit you were so kind to pay me in the Temple, (the only time I ever saw you without pleasure,) what have I not suffered? And since it has pleased God to restore me to the use of my reason, what have I not enjoyed? You know, by experience, how pleasant it is to feel the first approaches of health after a fever; but, Oh the fever of the brain! To feel the quenching of that fire is indeed a blessing which I think it impossible to receive without the most consummate gratitude. Terrible as this chastisement is, I acknowledge in it the hand of an infinite justice; nor is it at all more difficult for me to perceive in it the hand of an infi-

nite mercy likewise: when I consider the effect it has had upon me, I am exceedingly thankful for it, and, without hyprocrisy, esteem it the greatest blessing, next to life itself, I ever received from the divine bounty. I pray God that I may ever retain this sense of it, and then I am sure I shall continue to be, as I am at present, really happy.

I write thus to you, that you may not think me a forlorn and wretched creature; which you might be apt to do considering my very distant removal from every friend I have in the world—a circumstance which before this event befel me, would undoubtedly have made me so; but my affliction has taught me a road to happiness, which without it I should never have found; and I know, and have experience of it every day, that the mercy of God, to him who believes himself the object of it, is more than sufficient to compensate for the loss of every other blessing.

You may now inform all those whom you think really interested in my welfare, that they have no need to be apprehensive on the score of my happiness at present. And you yourself will believe that my happiness is no dream, because I have told you the foundation on which it is built. What

I have written would appear like enthusiasm to many, for we are apt to give that name to every warm affection of the mind in others, which we have not experienced in ourselves; but to you, who have so much to be thankful for, and a temper inclined to gratitude, it will not appear so.

I beg you will give my love to Sir Thomas, and believe that I am obliged to you both for enquiring after me at St. Alban's.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER IV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Huntingdon, July 4, 1765.

Being just emerged from the Ouse, I sit down to thank you, my dear Cousin, for your friendly and comfortable letter. What could you think of my unaccountable behaviour to you in that visit I mentioned in my last? I remember I neither spoke to you, nor looked at you. The solution of the mystery indeed followed soon after, but at the time it must have been inexplicable. The up-

roar within was even then begun, and my silence was only the sulkiness of a thunder storm before it opens. I am glad, however, that the only instance, in which I knew not how to value your company, was, when I was not in my senses. It was the first of the kind, and I trust in God it will be the last.

How naturally does affliction make us Christians! and how impossible is it when all human help is vain and the whole earth too poor and trifling to furnish us with one moment's peace, how impossible is it then to avoid looking at the Gospel! It gives me some concern, though at the same time it encreases my gratitude, to reflect, that a convert made in Bedlam, is more likely to be a stumbling block to others than to advance their faith. But if it has that effect upon any, it is owing to their reasoning amiss, and drawing their conclusions from false premises. He who can ascribe an amendment of life and manners, and a reformation of the heart itself, to madness, is guilty of an absurdity, that in any other case would fasten the imputation of madness upon himself; for by so doing, he ascribes a reasonable effect to an unreasonable cause and a positive effect to a negative. But when Christianity only is to be sacrificed, he that stabs deepest is always the wisest

man. You, my dear Cousin, yourself will be apt to think I carry the matter too far, and that in the present warmth of my heart, I make too ample a concession in saying, that I am *only now* a convert. You think I always believed, and I thought so too, but you were deceived, and so was I. I called myself indeed a Christian, but he who knows my heart, knows that I never did a right thing, nor abstained from a wrong one, because I was so. But if I did either, it was under the influence of some other motive. And it is such seeming Christians, such pretending believers, that do most mischief to the cause, and furnish the strongest arguments to support the infidelity of its enemies: unless profession and conduct go together, the man's life is a lie, and the validity of what he professes itself is called in question. The difference between a Christian and an Unbeliever, would be so striking, if the treacherous allies of the Church would go over at once to the other side, that I am satisfied religion would be no loser by the bargain.

I reckon it one instance of the Providence that has attended me throughout this whole event, that instead of being delivered into the hands of one of the London physicians, who were so much nearer

that I wonder I was not, I was carried to Doctor Cotton. I was not only treated by him with the greatest tenderness while I was ill, and attended with the utmost diligence, but when my reason was restored to me, and I had so much need of a religious friend to converse with, to whom I could open my mind on the subject without reserve, I could hardly have found a fitter person for the purpose. My eagerness and anxiety to settle my opinions upon that long neglected point, made it necessary, that while my mind was yet weak, and my spirits uncertain, I should have some assistance. The doctor was as ready to administer relief to me in this article likewise, and as well qualified to do it, as in that, which was more immediately his province. How many physicians would have thought this an irregular appetite, and a symptom of remaining madness! But if it were so, my friend was as mad as myself, and it is well for me that he was so.

My dear Cousin, you know not half the deliverances I have received; my Brother is the only one in the family, who does. My recovery is indeed a signal one, but a greater, if possible, went before it. My future life must express my thankfulness, for by words I cannot do it

I pray God to bless you, and my friend Sir Thomas.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER V.

To Lady HESKETH.

Huntingdon, July 5, 1765.

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,

My pen runs so fast you will begin to wish you had not put it in motion, but you must consider we have not met, even by letter, almost these two years, which will account, in some measure, for my pestering you in this manner; besides my last was no answer to yours, and therefore I consider myself as still in your debt. To say truth, I have this long time promised myself a correspondence with you as one of my principal pleasures.

I should have written to you from St. Alban's long since, but was willing to perform quarantine first, both for my own sake, and because I thought my letters would be more satisfactory to you from

any other quarter. You will perceive I allowed myself a very sufficient time for the purpose, for I date my recovery from the twenty-fifth of last July, having been ill seven months, and well twelve months. It was on that day my Brother came to see me; I was far from well when he came in; Yet though he only staid one day with me, his company served to put to flight a thousand deliriums and delusions which I still laboured under, and the next morning I found myself a new creature. But to the present purpose.

As far as I am acquainted with this place, I like it extremely. Mr. Hodgson, the minister of the parish, made me a visit the day before yesterday. He is very sensible, a good preacher, and conscientious in the discharge of his duty. He is very well known to Doctor Newton, bishop of Bristol, the author of the treatise on the Prophecies, one of our best bishops, and who has written the most demonstrative proof of the truth of Christianity in my mind, that ever was published.

There is a village called Hertford, about a mile and a half from hence. The church there is very prettily situated upon a rising ground, so close to the river, that it washes the wall of the church

yard. I found an epitaph there the other morning the two first lines of which being better than any thing else I saw there, I made shift to remember. It is by a widow on her husband.

" Thou wast too good to live on earth with me,
" And I not good enough to die with thee.

The distance of this place from Cambridge is the worst circumstance belonging to it. My brother and I are fifteen miles asunder, which, considering that I came hither for the sake of being near him, is rather too much. I wish that young man was better known in the family. He has as many good qualities as his nearest kindred could wish to find in him.

As Mr. Quin very roundly expressed himself upon some such occasion, " here is very plentiful accommodation, and great happiness of provision." So that if I starve, it must be through forgetfulness, rather than scarcity.

Fare thee well, my good and dear Cousin.

Ever yours.

W. C.

LETTER VI.

To Lady HESKETH.

July 12, 1765.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

You are very good to me, and if you will only continue to write at such intervals as you find convenient, I shall receive all that pleasure, which I proposed to myself from our correspondence. I desire no more than that you would never drop me for any length of time together, for I shall then think you only write because something happened to put you in mind of me, or for some other reason equally mortifying. I am not however so unreasonable as to expect you should perform this act of friendship so frequently as myself, for you live in a world swarming with engagements, and my hours are almost all my own. You must every day be employed in doing what is expected from you by a thousand others, and I have nothing to do but what is most agreeable to myself.

Our mentioning Newton's treatise on the Prophecies, brings to my mind an anecdote of Dr. Young, who, you know, died lately at Welwyn. Dr. Cotton, who was intimate with him, payed him a

visit about a fortnight before he was seized with his last illness. The old man was then in perfect health; the antiquity of his person, the gravity of his utterance, and the earnestness with which he discoursed about religion, gave him, in the doctor's eye, the appearance of a prophet. They had been delivering their sentiments upon this book of Newton, when Young closed the conference thus:—"My friend, there are "two considerations upon which my faith in Christ "is built as upon a rock: The fall of man, the re- "demption of man, and the resurrection of man, "the three cardinal articles of our religion are such "as human ingenuity could never have invented, "therefore they must be divine; the other argu- "ment is this—If the Prophecies have been fulfilled "(of which there is abundant demonstration) the "Scripture must be the word of God, and if the "Scripture is the word of God, Christianity must "be true."

This treatise on the Prophecies serves a double purpose, it not only proves the truth of religion, in a manner that never has been, nor ever can be controverted, but it proves likewise, that the Roman Catholic is the apostate, and Anti-christian church.

so frequently foretold both in the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, so fatally connected is the refutation of Popery, with the truth of Christianity, when the latter is evinced by the completion of the Prophecies, that in proportion as light is thrown upon the one, the deformities and errors of the other are more plainly exhibited. But I leave you to the book itself; there are parts of it which may possibly afford you less entertainment than the rest, because you have never been a school-boy; but in the main it is so interesting, and you are so fond of that which is so, that I am sure you will like it.

My dear Cousin, how happy am I in having a friend, to whom I can open my heart upon these subjects! I have many intimates in the world, and have had many more than I shall have hereafter, to whom a long letter, upon these most important articles, would appear tiresome at least, if not impertinent. But I am not afraid of meeting with that reception from you, who have never yet made it your interest, that there should be no truth in the word of God. May this everlasting truth be your comfort while you live, and attend you with peace and joy in your last moments! I love you too well not to

make this a part of my prayers, and when I remember my friends on these occasions, there is no likelihood that you can be forgotten.

Yours ever,

W. C.

P. S.—Cambridge.—I add this postscript at my Brother's rooms. He desires to be affectionately remembered to you, and if you are in Town about a fortnight hence, when he proposes to be there himself, will take a breakfast with you.

LETTER VII.

To Lady HESKETH,

Huntingdon, August 1, 1765.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

If I was to measure your obligation to write, by my own desire to hear from you, I should call you an idle correspondent if a post went by without bringing me a letter, but I am not so unreasonable; on the contrary, I think myself very happy in hearing from you upon your own

terms, as you find most convenient. Your short history of my family is a very acceptable part of your letter; if they really interest themselves in my welfare, it is a mark of their great charity for one who has been a disappointment and a vexation to them ever since he has been be of consequence to be either. My friend the Major's behaviour to me, after all he suffered by my abandoning his interest and my own, in so miserable a manner, is a noble instance of generosity, and true greatness of mind: and, indeed, I know no man in whom those qualities are more conspicuous; one need only furnish him with an opportunity to display them, and they are always ready to shew themselves in his words and actions, and even in his countenance, at a moment's warning. I have great reason to be thankful—I have lost none of my acquaintance, but those whom I determined not to keep. I am sorry this class is so numerous. What would I not give that every friend I have in the world, were not almost, but altogether Christians. My dear Cousin, I am half afraid to talk in this style, lest I should seem to indulge a censorious humour, instead of hoping, as I ought, the best for all men. But what can be said against ocular proof, and what is hope when it

is built upon presumption? To use the most holy name in the universe for no purpose, or a bad one, contrary to his own express commandment, to pass the day, and the succeeding days, weeks, and months, and years, without one act of private devotion, one confession of our sins, or one thanksgiving for the numberless blessings we enjoy: To hear the word of God in public, with a distracted attention, or with none at all; to absent ourselves voluntarily from the blessed Communion, and to live in the total neglect of it, though our Saviour has charged it upon us with an express injunction, are the common and ordinary liberties which the generality of professors allow themselves; and what is this, but to live without God in the world? Many causes may be assigned for this Anti-christian spirit, so prevalent among Christians, but one of the principal I take to be their utter forgetfulness that they have the word of God in their possession.

My friend, Sir William Russel, was distantly related to a very accomplished man, who, though he never believed the Gospel, admired the Scriptures as the sublimest compositions in the world, and read them often. I have been intimate myself with a man of fine taste, who has confessed to me, that

though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, yet he never could read St. Luke's account of our Saviour's appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, without being wonderfully affected by it, and he thought that if the stamp of divinity was any where to be found in Scripture, it was strongly marked, and visibly impressed upon that passage. If these men, whose hearts were chilled with the darkness of infidelity, could find such charms in the mere style of the Scripture, what must they find there, whose eye penetrates deeper than the letter, and who firmly believe themselves interested in all the invaluable privileges of the Gospel? "He that believeth on me, is passed "from death unto life," though it be as plain a sentence as words can form, has more beauties in it for such a person, than all the labours antiquity can boast of. If my poor man of taste, whom I have just mentioned, had searched a little further, he might have found other parts of the sacred history as strongly marked with the characters of divinity as that he mentioned. The parable of the prodigal son, the most beautiful fiction that ever was invented; our Saviour's speech to his disciples, with which he closes his earthly ministration, full of the su-

blimest dignity, and tenderest affection, surpass every thing that I ever read, and, like the spirit by which they were dictated, fly directly to the heart. If the Scripture did not disdain all affectation of ornament, one should call these, and such as these, the ornamental parts of it, but the matter of it is that, upon which it principally stakes its credit with us, and the style, however, excellent and peculiar to itself, is the only one of those many external evidences by which it recommends itself to our belief.

I shall be very much obliged to you for the book you mention; you could not have sent me any thing that would have been more welcome, unless you had sent me your own meditations instead of them.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER VIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Huntingdon, August 17, 1765.

You told me, my dear Cousin, that I need not fear writing too often, and you perceive I take you at your word. At present, however, I

shall do little more than thank you for your Meditations, which I admire exceedingly, the author of them manifestly loved the truth with an undissembled affection, had made great progress in the knowledge of it, and experienced all the happiness that naturally results from that noblest of all attainments. There is one circumstance which he gives us frequent occasion to observe in him, which I believe will ever be found in the philosophy of every true Christian. I mean, the eminent rank which he assigns to faith among the virtues, as the source and parent of them all. There is nothing more infallibly true than this, and doubtless it is with a view to the purifying and sanctifying nature of a true faith, that our Saviour says. "He that believeth in me hath "everlasting life," with many other expressions to the same purpose. Considered in this light, no wonder it has the power of salvation ascribed to it! Considered in any other, we must suppose it to operate like an oriental talisman, if it obtains for us the least advantage; which is an affront to him, who insists upon our having it, and will on no other terms admit us to his favour. I mention this distinguishing article in his reflections the rather, because it serves for a solid foundation to the distinc-

tion I made in my last, between the specious professor, and the true believer, between him whose faith is his sunday-suit, and him who never puts it it off at all—a distinction I am a little fearful sometimes of making, because it is a heavy stroke upon the practice of more than half the Christians in the world.

My dear Cousin, I told you I read the book with great pleasure, which may be accounted for from its own merit, but perhaps it pleased me the more, because you had travelled the same road before me. You know there is such a pleasure as this, which would want great explanation to some folks, being perhaps a mystery to those, whose hearts are a mere muscle, and serve only for the purposes of an even circulation.

W. C.

LETTER IX.

To Lady HESKETH.

Sept. 4, 1765.

Though I have some very agreeable acquaintance at Huntingdon, my dear Cousin, none are so agreeable as the arrival of your

letters. I thank you for that, which I have just received from Droxford, and particularly for that part of it, where you give me an unlimited liberty upon the subject, I have already so often written upon. Whatever interests us deeply, as naturally flows into the pen, as it does from the lips, when every restraint is taken away, and we meet with a friend indulgent enough to attend to us. How many, in all that variety of characters, with whom I am acquainted, could I find, after the strictest search, to whom I could write, as I do to you? I hope the number will increase. I am sure it cannot easily be diminished. Poor——! I have heard the whole of his history, and can only lament, what I am sure I can make no apology for. Two of my friends have been cut off during my illness, in the midst of such a life, as it is frightful to reflect upon, and here am I, in better health and spirits, that I can almost remember to have enjoyed before, after having spent months in the apprehension of instant death. How mysterious are the ways of Providence! Why did I receive grace and mercy? Why was I preserved, afflicted for my good, received, as I trust, into favor, and blessed with the greatest happiness, I can ever know, or hope for, in this life, while these were overtaken by the

great arrest, unawakened, unrepenting, and every way unprepared for it? His infinite wisdom, to whose infinite mercy I owe it all, can solve these questions, and none beside him. If a free-thinker, as many a man miscalls himself, could be brought to give a serious answer to them, he would certainly say—"Without doubt, Sir, you was in great danger, you "had a narrow escape, a most fortunate one indeed." How excessively foolish, as well as shocking! As if life depended upon luck, and all that we are, or can be, all that we have or hope for, could possibly be referred to accident. Yet to this freedom of thought it is owing that he, who, as our Saviour tells us, is thoroughly apprized of the death of the meanest of his creatures, is supposed to leave those, whom he has made in his own image, to the mercy of chance; and to this therefore it is likewise owing, that the correction, which our heavenly Father bestows upon us, that we may be fitted to receive his blessing, is so often disappointed of its benevolent intention, and that men despise the chastening of the Almighty. Fevers and all diseases are accidents, and long life, recovery, at least from sickness, is the gift of the physician. No man can be a greater friend to the use of means upon these occasions than myself, for it were

presumption and enthusiasm to neglect them. God has endued them with salutary properties on purpose that we might avail ourselves of them, otherwise that part of his creation were in vain. But to impute our recovery to the medicine, and to carry our views no further, is to rob God of his honor, and is saying in effect, that he has partedwith the keys of life and death, and, by giving to a drug the power to heal us, has placed our lives out of his own reach. He that thinks thus, may as well fall upon his knees at once, and return thanks to the medicine that cured him, for it was certainly more immediately instrumental in his recovery, than either the apothecary or the doctor. My dear Cousin, a firm persuasion of the superintendence of Providence over all our concerns, is absolutely necessary to our happiness. Without it, we cannot be said to believe in the Scripture, or practise any thing like resignation to his will. If I am convinced that no affliction can befal me, without the permission of God, I am convinced likewise, that he sees, and knows, that I am afflicted; believing this, I must, in the same degree, believe, that if I pray to him for deliverance, he hears me; I must needs know likewise, with equal assurance, that if he hears, he will also deli-

ver me, if that will upon the whole be most conducive to my happiness; and if he does not deliver me, I may be well assured, that he has none but the most benevolent intention in declining it. He made us, not because we could add to his happiness, which was always perfect, but that we might be happy ourselves; and will he not in all his dispensations towards us, even in the minutest, consult that end for which he made us? To suppose the contrary, is (which we are not always aware of) affronting every one of his attributes, and at the same time the certain consequence of disbelieving his care for us, is that we renounce utterly our dependence upon him. In this view it will appear plainly, that the line of duty is not stretched too tight, when we are told, that we ought to accept every thing at his hands as a blessing, and to be thankful even while we smart under the rod of iron, with which he sometimes rules us. Without this persuasion, every blessing, however we may think ourselves happy in it, loses its greatest recommendation, and every affliction is intolerable. Death itself must be welcome to him who has this faith, and he who has it not, must aim at it, if he is not a madman. You cannot think how glad I am to hear, you are going

to commence lady, and mistress of Freemantle.* I know it well, and could go to it from Southampton blindfold. You are kind to invite me to it, and I shall be so kind to myself as to accept the invitation, though I should not, for a slight consideration, be prevailed upon to quit my beloved retirement at Huntingdon.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER X.

To Lady HESKETH.

Huntingdon, Sept. 14, 1765.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

The longer I live here, the better I like the place, and the people who belong to it. I am upon very good terms with no less than five families, besides two or three odd scrambling fellows like myself. The last acquaintance I made here is with the race of the Unwins, consisting of father and mother, son and daughter, the most comfortable, social folks you ever knew. The son is

* Freemantle, a villa near Southampton.

about twenty-one years of age, one of the most unreserved, and amiable young men, I ever conversed with. He is not yet arrived at that time of life, when suspicion recommends itself to us in the form of wisdom, and sets every thing, but our own dear selves, at an immeasurable distance from our esteem and confidence. Consequently he is known almost as soon as seen, and having nothing in his heart, that makes it necessary for him to keep it barred and bolted, opens it to the perusal even of a stranger. The father is a clergyman, and the son is designed for orders. The design, however, is quite his own, proceeding merely from his being, and having always been, sincere in his belief and love of the Gospel. Another acquaintance, I have lately made, is with a Mr. Nicholson, a North-country divine, very poor, but very good, and very happy. He reads prayers here twice a day, all the year round; and travels on foot, to serve two churches, every Sunday through the year, his journey out and home again being sixteen miles. I supped with him last night. He gave me bread and cheese, and a black jug of ale of his own brewing, and doubtless brewed by his own hands. Another, of my acquaintance, is Mr. ——, a thin, tall, old man, and as good as he is

thin. He drinks nothing but water, and eats no flesh, partly (I believe) from a religious scruple (for he is very religious), and partly in the spirit of a valetudinarian. He is to be met with every morning of his life, at about six o'clock, at a fountain of very fine water, about a mile from the town, which is reckoned extremely like the Bristol spring. Being both early risers, and the only early walkers in the place, we soon became acquainted. His great piety can be equalled by nothing, but his great regularity, for he is the most perfect time-piece in the world. I have received a visit likewise from Mr. ——. He is very much a gentleman, well-read, and sensible. I am persuaded in short, that if I had had the choice of all England, where to fix my abode, I could not have chosen better for myself, and most likely, I should not have chosen so well.

You say, you hope it is not necessary for salvation, to undergo the same afflictions that I have undergone. No! my dear Cousin, God deals with his children as a merciful father; he does not, as he himself tells us, afflict willingly the sons of men. Doubtless there are many, who having been placed, by his good providence, out of the reach of any great evil, and the influence of bad example, have, from

their very infancy, been partakers of the grace of his holy Spirit, in such a manner as never to have allowed themselves in any grievous offence against him. May you love him more and more, day by day; as every day, while you think upon him, you will find him more worthy of your love: and may you be finally accepted by him for his sake, whose intercession for all his faithful servants cannot but prevail!

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER XI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Huntingdon, Oct. 10, 1765.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I should grumble at your long silence, if I did not know, that one may love one's friends very well, though one is not always in a humour to write to them. Besides I have the satisfaction of being perfectly sure, that you have at least twenty times recollected the debt you owe me, and

as often resolved to pay it: and perhaps, while you remain indebted to me, you think of me twice as often as you would do, if the account was clear. These are the reflections, with which I comfort myself under the affliction of not hearing from you; my temper does not incline me to jealousy, and if it did, I should set all right, by having recourse to what I have already received from you.

I thank God for your friendship, and for every friend I have; for all the pleasing circumstances here, for my health of body, and perfect serenity of mind. To recollect the past, and compare it with the present, is all I have need of, to fill me with gratitude; and to be grateful is to be happy. Not that I think myself sufficiently thankful, or that I shall ever be so in this life. The warmest heart perhaps only feels by fits, and is often as insensible as the coldest. This, at least, is frequently the case with mine, and oftener than it should be. But the mercy that can forgive iniquity, will never be severe to mark our frailties; to that mercy, my dear Cousin, I commend you, with earnest wishes for your welfare, and remain your ever affectionate

W. C.

LETTER XII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Huntingdon, Oct. 18, 1765.

I wish you joy, my dear Cousin, of being safely arrived in port from the storms of Southampton. For my own part, who am but as a Thames wherry, in a world full of tempest and commotion, I know so well the value of the creek I have put into, and the snugness it affords me, that I have a sensible sympathy with you in the pleasure you find, in being once more blown to Droxford. I know enough of Miss Morley to send her my compliments; to which, if I had never seen her, her affection for you would sufficiently intitle her. If I neglected to do it sooner, it is only because I am naturally apt to neglect what I ought to do: and if I was as genteel as I am negligent, I should be the most delightful creature in the universe. I am glad you think so favorably of my Huntingdon acquaintance: they are indeed a nice set of folks, and suit me exactly. I should have been more particular in my account of Miss Unwin, if I had had materials for a minute description. She is about eighteen years of age, rather handsome and genteel. In her Mother's

company she says little; not because her mother requires it of her, but because she seems glad of that excuse for not talking, being somewhat inclined to bashfulness. There is the most remarkable cordiality between all the parts of the family; and the mother and daughter seem to doat upon each other. The first time I went to the house, I was introduced to the daughter alone; and sat with her near half an hour, before her brother came in, who had appointed me to call upon him. Talking is necessary, in a *tête-à-tête*, to distinguish the persons of the drama, from the chairs they sit on: accordingly she talked a great deal, and extremely well; and, like the rest of the family, behaved with as much ease, and address, as if we had been old acquaintance. She resembles her mother in her great piety, who is one of the most remarkable instances of it I have ever seen. They are altogether the cheerfullest, and most engaging family-piece, it is possible to conceive. Since I wrote the above, I met Mrs. Unwin in the street, and went home with her. She and I walked together near two hours, in the garden, and had a conversation, which did me more good, than I should have received from an audience of the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me, and I never

see her without being the better for her company. I am treated in the family, as if I was a near relation; and have been repeatedly invited to call upon them at all times. You know what a shy fellow I am; I cannot prevail with myself to make so much use of this privilege, as I am sure they intend I should; but perhaps this aukwardness will wear off hereafter. It was my earnest request, before I left St. Alban's, that wherever it might please Providence to dispose of me, I might meet with such an acquaintance as I find in Mrs. Unwin. How happy it is to believe with a steadfast assurance, that our petitions are heard, even while we are making them—and how delightful to meet with a proof of it, in the effectual and actual grant of them! Surely it is a gracious finishing, given to those means, which the Almighty has been pleased to make use of, for my conversion. After having been deservedly rendered unfit for any society, to be again qualified for it, and admitted at once into the fellowship of those whom God regards as the excellent of the earth, and whom, in the emphatical language of Scripture, he preserves as the apple of his eye, is a blessing, which carries with it the stamp and visible superscription of divine bounty——a grace unlimitted as undeserved; and, like

its glorious Author, free in its course, and blessed in its operation!

My dear Cousin! Health and happiness, and above all, the favor of our great and gracious Lord attend you! While we seek it, in spirit and in truth, we are infinitely more secure of it, than of the next breath we expect to draw. Heaven and earth have their destined periods; ten thousand worlds will vanish at the consummation of all things; but the word of God standeth fast; and they, who trust in him, shall never be confounded.

My love to all who inquire after me.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XIII.

To MAJOR COWPER.

Huntingdon, Oct. 18, 1766.

MY DEAR MAJOR,

I have neither lost the use of my fingers nor my memory, though my unaccountable silence might incline you to suspect that I had lost

both. The history of those things which have, from time to time, prevented my scribbling, would not only be insipid, but extremely voluminous; for which reasons, they will not make their appearance at present, nor probably at any time hereafter. If my neglecting to write to you, were a proof, that I had never thought of you, and that had been really the case, five shillings a-piece would have been much too little to give for the sight of such a monster! but I am no such monster, nor do I perceive in myself the least tendency to such a transformation. You may recollect, that I had but very uncomfortable expectations of the accommodations, I should meet with at Huntingdon. How much better is it, to take our lot, where it shall please Providence to cast it, without anxiety! Had I chosen for myself, it is impossible I could have fixt upon a place so agreeable to me in all respects. I so much dreaded the thought of having a new acquaintance to make, with no other recommendation than that of being a perfect stranger, that I heartily wished no creature here might take the least notice of me. Instead of which, in about two months after my arrival, I became known to all the visitable people

here, and do verily think it the most agreeable neighbourhood, I ever saw.

Here are three families, who have received me with the utmost civility; and two, in particular, have treated me with as much cordiality, as if their pedigree and mine had grown upon the same sheep-skin. Besides these, there are three or four single men, who suit my temper to a hair. The town is one of the neatest in England, the country is fine, for several miles about it, and the roads, which are all turnpike, and strike out four or five different ways, are perfectly good all the year round. I mention this latter circumstance, chiefly because my distance from Cambridge has made a horseman of me at last, or at least is likely to do so. My brother and I meet every week, by an alternate reciprocation of intercourse, as Sam Johnson would express it; sometimes I get a lift in a neighbour's chaise, but generally ride. As to my own personal condition, I am much happier than the day is long, and sun-shine and candle-light alike see me perfectly contented. I get books in abundance, as much company as I chuse, a deal of *comfortable leisure*, and enjoy better health, I think, than for many years past. What is there wanting to

make me happy? Nothing, if I can but be as thankful as I ought; and I trust, that He, who has bestowed so many blessings upon me, will give me gratitude to crown them all. I beg you will give my love to my dear Cousin Maria, and to every body at the Park. If Mrs. Maitland is with you, as I suspect by a passage in Lady Hesketh's letter to me, pray remember me to her very affectionately. And believe me, my deaf friend, ever yours.

W. C.

LETTER XIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

October 25, 1765.

DEAR JOE,

I am afraid the month of October has proved rather unfavorable to the belle assemblée at Southampton; high winds and continual rains being bitter enemies to that agreeable lounge, which you and I are equally fond of. I have very cordially betaken myself to my books, and my fireside; and seldom leave them, unless for exercise. I

have added another family to the number of those I was acquainted with, when you were here. Their name is Unwin—the most agreeable people imaginable; quite sociable, and as free from the ceremonious civility of country gentlefolks, as any I ever met with. They treat me more like a near relation than a stranger, and their house is always open to me. The old gentleman carries me to Cambridge in his chaise. He is a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as parson Adams. His wife has a very uncommon understanding, has read much, to excellent purpose, and is more polite than a duchess. The son, who belongs to Cambridge is a most amiable young man, and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of the family. They see but little company, which suits me exactly; go when I will, I find a house full of peace and cordiality in all its parts, and am sure to hear no scandal, but such discourse instead of it, as we are all better for. You remember Rousseau's description of an English morning; such are the mornings I spend with these good people; and the evenings differ from them in nothing, except that they are still more snug, and quieter. Now I know them, I wonder that I liked Huntingdon so well before I knew them, and am apt to think, I

should find every place disagreeable, that had not an Unwin belonging to it.

This incident convinces me of the truth of an observation I have often made, that when we circumscribe our estimate of all that is clever within the limits of our own acquaintance (which I at least have been always apt to do) we are guilty of a very uncharitable censure upon the rest of the world, and of a narrowness of thinking disgraceful to ourselves. Wapping and Redriff may contain some of the most amiable persons living, and such as one would go to Wapping and Redriff to make acquaintance with. You remember Mr. Gray's stanza—

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
"The deep unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
"Full many a rose is born to blush unseen,
"And waste its fragrance on the desert air."

Yours, dear Joe,

W. C.

LETTER XV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Huntingdon, March 6, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I have for some time past imputed your silence to the cause, which you yourself assign for it, viz. to my change of situation; and was even sagacious enough to account for the frequency of your letters to me, while I lived alone, from your attention to me in a state of such solitude, as seemed to make it an act of particular charity to write to me. I bless God for it, I was happy even then; solitude has nothing gloomy in it, if the soul points upwards. St. Paul tells his Hebrew converts, "Ye are come (already come) to Mount Sion, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the first born, which are written in Heaven, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." When this is the case, as surely it was with them, or the Spirit of Truth had never spoken it, there is an end of the melancholy and dullness of life at once. You will not suspect me, my dear Cousin, of a design to understand this passage literally. But

this, however, it certainly means; that a lively faith is able to anticipate, in some measure, the joys of that heavenly society, which the soul shall actually possess hereafter.

Since I have changed my situation, I have found still greater cause of thanksgiving to the Father of all mercies. The family with whom I live, are Christians; and it has pleased the Almighty to bring me to the knowledge of them, that I may want no means of improvement, in that temper, and conduct, which he is pleased to require in all his servants.

My dear Cousin! one half of the Christian world would call this madness, fanaticism, and folly: but are not these things warranted by the word of God, not only in the passages I have cited, but in many others? If we have no communion with God here, surely we can expect none hereafter. A faith that does not place our conversation in Heaven; that does not warm the heart, and purify it too; that does not, in short, govern our thought, word, and deed, is no faith, nor will it obtain for us any spiritual blessing here, or hereafter. Let us see therefore, my dear Cousin, that we do not deceive ourselves in a matter of such infinite moment. The world will be ever telling us, that we are good

enough; and the world will vilify us behind our backs. But it is not the world, which tries the heart; that is the prerogative of God alone. My dear Cousin! I have often prayed for you behind your back, and now I pray for you to your face. There are many who would not forgive me this wrong; but I have known you so long, and so well, that I am not afraid of telling you, how sincerely I wish for your growth in every Christian grace, in every thing that may promote and secure your everlasting welfare.

I am obliged to Mrs. Cowper for the book, which, you perceive, arrived safe. I am willing to consider it as an intimation on her part, that she would wish me to write to her, and shall do it accordingly. My circumstances are rather particular, such as call upon my friends, those, I mean, who are truly such, to take some little notice of me; and will naturally make those, who are not such in sincerity, rather shy of doing it. To this I impute the silence of many with regard to me, who before the affliction that befel me, were ready enough to converse with me.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER XVI.

To Mrs. COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am much obliged to you for Pearsall's Meditations, especially as it furnishes me with an occasion of writing to you, which is all I have waited for. My friends must excuse me if I write to none but those, who lay it fairly in my way to do so. The interference, I am apt to draw from their silence is, that they wish *me* to be silent too.

I have great reason, my dear Cousin, to be thankful to the gracious Providence, that conducted me to this place. The lady, in whose house I live, is so excellent a person, and regards me with a friendship so truly Christian, that I could almost fancy my own Mother restored to life again, to compensate to me for all the friends I have lost, and all my connexions broken. She has a son at Cambridge, in all respects worthy of such a mother, the most amiable young man I ever knew. His natural and acquired endowments are very considerable; and as to his virtues, I need only say, that he is a Christian. It ought to be a matter of daily thanksgiving

to me, that I am admitted into the society of such persons, and I pray God to make me, and keep me worthy of them.

Your brother Martin has been very kind to me, having written to me twice, in a stile, which, though it was once irksome to me, to say the least, I now know how to value. I pray God to forgive me the many light things I have both said, and thought, of him and his labours. Hereafter, I shall consider him as a burning and a shining light, and as one of those, "who having turned many to righteousness, shall shine hereafter as the stars for ever and ever."

So much for the state of my heart: as to my spirits, I am cheerful and happy, and having peace with God, have peace within myself. For the continuance of this blessing, I trust to Him who gives it; and they, who trust in Him, shall never be confounded.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

Huntingdon,
At the Rev. Mr. Unwin's,
March 11, 1766.

LETTER XVII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

April 4, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I agree with you, that letters are not essential to friendship; but they seem to be a natural fruit of it, when they are the only intercourse, that can be had. And a friendship producing no sensible effects, is so like indifference, that the appearance may easily deceive even an acute discerner. I retract, however, all that I said, in my last, upon this subject; having reason to suspect, that it proceeded from a principle, which I would discourage in myself upon all occasions; even a pride, that felt itself hurt upon a mere suspicion of neglect. I have so much cause for humility, and so much need of it too, and every little sneaking resentment is such an enemy to it, that I hope I shall never give quarter to any thing that appears in the shape of sullenness, or self-consequence, hereafter. Alas! if my best Friend, who laid down his life for me, were to remember all the instances, in which I have neglected him, and to plead them against me in judgment, where should I hide my guilty head in the day of recompence?

I will pray, therefore, for blessings upon my friends, though they cease to be so; and upon my enemies, though they continue such. The deceitfulness of the natural heart is inconceiveable. I know well, that I passed upon my friends for a person, at least religiously inclined, if not actually religious; and what is more wonderful, I thought myself a Christian, when I had no faith in Christ, when I saw no beauty in him, that I should desire him; in short, when I had neither faith nor love, nor any Christian grace whatever, but a thousand seeds of rebellion instead, evermore springing up in enmity against him. But blessed be God, even the God who is become my salvation. The hail of affliction, and rebuke for sin, has swept away the refuge of lies. It pleased the Almighty, in great mercy, to set all my misdeeds before me. At length, the storm being past, a quiet, and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded, such as ever attends the gift of living faith in the all-sufficient atonement, and the sweet sense of mercy and pardon purchased by the blood of Christ. Thus did he break me, and bind me up; thus did he wound me, and his hands made me whole. My dear Cousin, I make no apology for entertaining you with the history of my conversion; because I

know you to be a Christian, in the sterling import of the appellation. This is, however, but a very summary account of the matter; neither would a letter contain the astonishing particulars of it. If we ever meet again, in this world, I will relate them to you by word of mouth; if not, they will serve for the subject of a conference in the next, where I doubt not I shall remember, and record them, with a gratitude better suited to the subject.

Yours, my dear Cousin, affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XVIII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

April 17, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

As in matters unattainable by reason, and unrevealed in the Scripture, it is impossible to argue at all; so, in matters concerning which reason can only give a probable guess, and the Scripture has made no explicit discovery, it is, though not impossible to argue at all, yet impossi-

ble to argue to any certain conclusion. This seems to me to be the very case with the point in question——reason is able to form many plausible conjectures concerning the possibility of our knowing each other in a future state, and the Scripture has, here and there, favored us with an expression, that looks at least like a slight intimation of it; but because a conjecture can never amount to a proof, and a slight intimation cannot be construed into a positive assertion; therefore, I think, we can never come to any absolute conclusion upon the subject. We may, indeed, reason about the plausibility of our conjectures; and we may discuss, with great industry, and shrewdness of argument, those passages in the Scripture, which seem to favor the opinion; but still, no certain means having been afforded us, no certain end can be attained; and after all that can be said, it will still be doubtful, whether we shall know each other or not.

As to arguments founded upon human reason only, it would be easy to muster up a much greater number on the affirmative side of the question, than it would be worth my while to write, or yours to read. Let us see, therefore, what the Scripture says, or seems to say, towards the proof of it; and of this

kind of argument also, I shall insert but a few of those, which seem to me to be the fairest and clearest for the purpose. For after all, a disputant, on either side of this question, is in danger of that censure of our blessed Lord's; "Ye do err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God."

As to parables, I know it has been said, in the dispute concerning the intermediate state, that they are not argumentative; but this having been controverted by very wise and good men, and the parable of Dives and Lazarus having been used by such, to prove an intermediate state, I see not why it may not be as fairly used for the proof of any other matter, which it seems fairly to imply. In this parable, we see, that Dives is represented as knowing Lazarus, and Abraham as knowing them both; and the discourse between them is entirely concerning their respective characters and circumstances upon earth. Here, therefore, our Saviour seems to countenance the notion of a mutual knowledge and recollection: and if a soul that has perished, shall know the soul that is saved, surely the heirs of salvation shall know and recollect each other.

In the first epistle to the Thessalonians, the second chapter, and nineteenth verse, St. Paul says,

"What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?
"Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus
"Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and
"our joy."

As to the hope, which the Apostle has formed concerning them, he himself refers the accomplishment of it to the coming of Christ, meaning, that then he should receive the recompence of his labours in their behalf; his joy and glory he refers likewise to the same period, both which would result from the sight of such numbers redeemed by the blessing of God upon his ministration, when he should present them before the great Judge, and say, in the words of a greater than himself, "Lo! "I, and the children, whom thou hast given me." This seems to imply, that the Apostle should know the converts, and the converts the Apostle, at least at the day of judgment, and if then, why not afterwards?

See also the fourth chapter of that epistle, verses 13, 14, 16, which I have not room to transcribe. Here the Apostle comforts them, under their affliction for their deceased brethren, exhorting them "Not to sorrow as without hope;" and what is the hope, by which he teaches them to support their

spirits? Even this, "That them, which sleep in "Jesus, shall God bring with him." In other words, and by a fair paraphrase surely, telling them they are only taken from them for a season, and that they should receive them at their resurrection.

If you can take off the force of these Texts, my dear Cousin, you will go a great way towards shaking my opinion; if not, I think they must go a great way towards shaking yours.

The reason, why I did not send you my opinion of Pearsall was, because I had not then read him; I have read him since, and like him much, especially the latter part of him; but you have whetted my curiosity to see the last letter, by tearing it out; unless you can give me a good reason, why I should not see it, I shall enquire for the book the first time I go to Cambridge. Perhaps I may be partial to Hervey, for the sake of his other writings, but I cannot give Pearsall the preference to him, for I think him one of the most scriptural writers in the world.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XIX.

To Mrs. COWPER.

April 18, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Having gone as far as I thought needful, to justify the opinion of our meeting and knowing each other hereafter; I find, upon reflection, that I have done but half my business, and that one of the questions, you proposed, remains entirely unconsidered, viz. "Whether the things of "our present state will not be of too low and mean "a nature to engage our thoughts, or make a part "of our communications in Heaven."

The common and ordinary occurrences of life no doubt, and even the ties of kindred, and of all temporal interests, will be entirely discarded from amongst that happy society; and, possibly, even the remembrance of them done away. But it does not therefore follow, that our spiritual concerns, even in this life, will be forgotten; neither do I think, that they can ever appear trifling to us, in any the most distant period of eternity. God, as you say in reference to the Scripture, will be all in all. But does not that expression mean, that being admitted to so

near an approach to our heavenly Father and Redeemer, our whole nature, the soul, and all its faculties, will be employed in praising and adoring him? Doubtless, however, this will be the case; and if so, will it not furnish out a glorious theme of thanksgiving, to recollect "The rock, whence we "were hewn, and the hole of the pit, whence we "were digged?" To recollect the time, when our faith, which, under the tuition and nurture of the Holy Spirit, has produced such a plentiful harvest of immortal bliss, was as a grain of mustard seed, small in itself, promising but little fruit, and producing less? To recollect the various attempts, that were made upon it, by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and its various triumphs over all, by the assistance of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ! At present, whatever our convictions may be, of the sinfulness and corruption of our nature, we can make but a very imperfect estimate either of our weakness or our guilt. Then, no doubt, we shall understand the full value of the wonderful salvation wrought out for us: and it seems reasonable to suppose, that in order to form a just idea of our redemption, we shall be able to form a just one of the danger we have escaped; when we know how weak and frail we

were, surely we shall be more able to render due praise and honor to his strength, who fought for us: when we know completely the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and how deeply we were tainted by it, we shall know how to value the blood, by which we were cleansed, as we ought. The twenty-four elders, in the fifth of the Revelations, give glory to God for their redemption, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation. This surely implies a retrospect to their respective conditions upon earth, and that each remembered out of what particular kindred and nation he had been redeemed; and if so, then surely the minutest circumstances of their redemption did not escape their memory. They, who triumph over the Beast, in the fifteenth chapter, sing the song of Moses, the servant of God; and what was that song? A sublime record of Israel's deliverance, and the destruction of her enemies in the Red sea, typical, no doubt of the song, which the redeemed in Sion shall sing, to celebrate their own salvation, and the defeat of their spiritual enemies. This, again, implies a recollection of the dangers, they had before encountered, and the supplies of strength and ardour, they had in every emergency, received from

the great deliverer out of all. These quotations do not, indeed, prove, that their warfare upon earth includes a part of their converse with each other; but they prove, that it is a theme not unworthy to be heard even before the throne of God, and therefore it cannot be unfit for reciprocal communication.

But you doubt, whether there is *any* communication between the blessed at all; neither do I recollect any Scripture that proves it, or that bears any relation to the subject. But reason seems to require it so peremptorily, that a society, without social intercourse seems to be a solecism, and a contradiction in terms, and the inhabitants of those regions are called, you know, in Scripture, an innumerable *company*, and an *assembly*, which seems to convey the idea of society, as clearly as the word itself. Human testimony weighs but little in matters of this sort, but let it have all the weight it can: I know no greater names in divinity, than Watts, and Doddridge; they were both of this opinion, and I send you the words of the latter:

"Our *companions in glory* may probably assist "us by their wise and good observations, when we "come to make the *Providence of God*, here upon "earth, under the guidance and direction of our

"Lord Jesus Christ, the *subject of our mutual converse.*

Thus, my dear Cousin, I have spread out my reasons before you, for an opinion, which, whether admitted or denied, affects not the state, or interest, of our soul. May our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, conduct us into his own Jerusalem; where there shall be no night, neither any darkness at all; where we shall be free, even from innocent error, and perfect in the light of the knowledge of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

LETTER XX.

To Mrs. COWPER.

Huntingdon, Sept. 3, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is reckoned, you know, a great achievement, to silence an opponent in disputation; and your silence was of so long a continuance, that I might well begin to please myself with the appre-

hension of having accomplished so arduous a matter. To be serious, however, I am not sorry, that what I have said, concerning our knowledge of each other, in a future state, has a little inclined you to the affirmative. For though the redeemed of the Lord shall be sure of being as happy in that state, as infinite power, employed by infinite goodness, can make them; and therefore, it may seem immaterial, whether we shall, or shall not, recollect each other hereafter; yet our present happiness, at least, is a little interested in the question. A parent, a friend, a wife, must needs, I think, feel a little heart-ache, at the thought of an eternal separation from the objects of her regard: and not to know them, when she meets them in another life, or never to meet them at all, amounts though not altogether, yet nearly to the same thing. Remember them, I think she needs must. To hear that they are happy, will indeed be no small addition to her own felicity; but to see them so, will surely be a greater. Thus, at least, it appears to our present human apprehension; consequently, therefore, to think, that when we leave them, we lose them for ever, that we must remain eternally ignorant whether they, that were flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, partake with us of celestial glory, or

are disinherited of their heavenly portion, must shed a dismal gloom over all our present connexions. For my own part, this life is such a momentary thing, and all its interests have so shrunk in my estimation, since, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I became attentive to the things of another; that, like a worm in the bud of all my friendships and affections, this very thought would eat out the heart of them all, had I a thousand; and were their date to terminate with this life, I think I should have no inclination to cultivate, and improve such a fugitive business. Yet friendship is necessary to our happiness here; and built upon Christian principles, upon which only it can stand, is a thing even of religious sanction—for what is that love, which the Holy Spirit, speaking by St John, so much inculcates, but friendship? The only love which deserves the name; a love which can toil, and watch and deny itself, and go to death, for its brother. Worldly friendships are a poor weed, compared with this; and even this union of spirit in the bond of peace, would suffer, in my mind at least, could I think it were only coeval with our earthly mansions. It may possibly argue great weakness in me, in this instance, to stand so much in need of future hopes

to support me in the discharge of present duty. But so it is—I am far, I know, very far, from being perfect in Christian love, or any other divine attainment, and am therefore unwilling to forego whatever may help me in my progress.

You are so kind as to enquire after my health, for which reason I must tell you, what otherwise would not be worth mentioning, that I have lately been just enough indisposed to convince me, that not only human life in general, but mine in particular, hangs by a slender thread. I am stout enough in appearance, yet a little illness demolishes me. I have had a severe shake, and the building is not so firm as it was. But I bless God for it, with all my heart. If the inner man be but strengthened, day by day, as I hope, under the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost, it will be, no matter how soon the outward is dissolved. He, who has, in a manner, raised me from the dead, in a literal sense, has given me the grace, I trust, to be ready at the shortest notice, to surrender up to him that life, which I have twice received from him. Whether I live or die, I desire it may be to His Glory, and it must be to my happiness. I thank God that I have those amongst my kindred, to whom I can write, without reserve.

my sentiments upon this subject, as I do to you. A letter upon any other subject is more insipid to me than ever my task was, when a school-boy, and I say not this in vain glory, God forbid! but to shew you what the Almighty, whose name I am unworthy to mention, has done for me, the chief of sinners. Once he was a terror to me, and his service, Oh what a weariness it was! Now I can say, I love him, and his holy name, and am never so happy as when I speak of his mercies to me.

Yours, dear Cousin,

W. C.

LETTER XXI.

To Mrs. COWPER.

Huntingdon, Oct. 20, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am very sorry for poor Charles's illness, and hope you will soon have cause to thank God for his complete recovery. We have an epidemical fever in this country likewise, which leaves behind it a continual sighing, almost to suffocation; not that I have seen any instance of it, for

blessed be God! our family have hitherto escaped it, but such was the account, I heard of it this morning.

I am obliged to you for the interest you take in my welfare, and for your enquiring, so particularly, after the manner, in which my time passes here. As to amusements, I mean what the world calls such, we have none: the place indeed swarms with them; and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessaries to this way of murthering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you, how we *do not* spend our time, I will next say, how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine; till eleven, we read either the Scripture, or the Sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries: at eleven we attend Divine Service, which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval, I either read, in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs. Unwin and her

son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some Hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord, make up a tolerabl. concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read, and converse, as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns, or a sermon, and last of all, the family are called to prayers. I need not tell *you* that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness, accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her, and her son and I are brothers. Blessed be the God of our salvation for such companions, and for such a life, above all for an heart to like it.

I have had many anxious thoughts about

taking orders, and I believe every new convert is apt to think himself called upon for that purpose; but it has pleased God, by means, which there is no need to particularize, to give me full satisfaction as to the propriety of declining it; indeed, they who have the least idea of what I have suffered, from the dread of public exhibitions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter. In the mean time, if it please the Almighty, I may be an instrument of turning many to the truth, in a private way, and hope that my endeavours, in this way, have not been entirely unsuccessful. Had I the zeal of Moses, I should want an Aaron to be my spokesman.

Yours ever, my dear Cousin,

W. C.

LETTER XXII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

March 11, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

To find those who are clearly and strongly persuaded of evangelical truth,

gives me a pleasure superior to any, this world can afford me. Judge then, whether your lettter, in which the body and substance of a saving faith is so evidently set forth, could meet with a lukewarm reception at my hands, or be entertained with indifference! Would you know the true reason of my long silence? Conscious that my religious principles are generally excepted against, and that the conduct they produce, wherever they are heartily maintained, is still more the object of disapprobation than those principles themselves, and remembering, that I had made both the one and the other known to you, without having any clear assurance that our faith in Jesus was of the same stamp and character, I could not help thinking it possible, that you might disapprove both my sentiments and practice; that you might think the one unsupported by Scripture, and the other whimsical, and unnecessarily strict and rigorous, and consequently would be rather pleased with the suspension of a correspondence, which a different way of thinking, upon so momentous a subject, as that we wrote upon, was likely to render te[illegible], and irksome, to you.

[illegible] told you the truth from my heart; forgive me [illegible] spurious suspicions, and never ima-

gine, that I shall hear from you upon this delightful theme without a real joy, or without prayer to God to prosper you in the way of his truth, his sanctifying and saving truth. The book, you mention, lies now upon my table. Marshall is an old acquaintance of mine; I have both read him, and heard him read with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he maintains are, under the influence of the spirit of Christ, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness; that Jesus is a *present* Saviour from the guilt of sin, by his most precious blood, and from the power of it by his spirit; that corrupt, and wretched, in ourselves, in him, and in *him only*, we are complete; that being united to Jesus by a lively faith, we have a solid, and eternal, interest in his obedience and sufferings, to justify us before the face of our heavenly Father, and that all this inestimable treasure, the earnest of which is in grace, and its consummation in glory, is given, freely *given*, to us of God; in short, that he hath opened the kingdom of Heaven *to all believers*. These are the truths, which, by the grace of God, shall ever be dearer to me than life itself; shall ever be placed next my heart, as the throne, whereon the Saviour himself shall sit, to sway all its motions, and reduce that

world of iniquity and rebellion, to a state of filial, and affectionate obedience to the will of the most Holy.

These, my dear Cousin, are the truths, to which by nature we are enemies—they debase the sinner, and exalt the Saviour, to a degree, which the pride of our hearts (till Almighty grace subdues them) is determined never to allow. May the Almighty reveal his Son in our hearts, continually more, and more, and teach us to increase in love towards him continually, for having *given* us the unspeakable riches of Christ.

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

LETTER XXIII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

March 14, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I just add a line, by way of Postcript to my last, to apprize you of the arrival of a very dear friend of mine at the Park, on Friday next, the son of Mr. Unwin, whom I have desired

to call on you, in his way from London to Huntingdon. If you knew him as well as I do, you would love him as much. But I leave the young man to speak for himself, which he is very able to do. He is ready possessed of an answer to every question, you can possibly ask concerning me, and knows my *whole story*, from first to last. I give you this previous notice, because I know you are not fond of strange faces, and because I thought it would, in some degree, save him the pain of announcing himself.

I am become a great florist, and shrub-doctor. If the Major can make up a small packet of seeds, that will make a figure in a garden, where we have little else besides jessamine and honey-suckle; such a packet I mean as may be put into one's fob, I will promise to take great care of them, as I ought to value natives of the Park. They must not be such however as require great skill in the management, for at present I have no skill to spare.

I think Marshall one of the best writers, and the most spiritual expositor of Scripture I ever read. I admire the strength of his argument, and the clearness of his reasonings, upon those parts of our most holy religion, which are generally least understood

(even by real Christians) as master-pieces of the kind. His section upon the union of the soul with Christ, is an instance of what I mean, in which he has spoken of a most mysterious truth, with admirable perspicuity, and with great good sense, making it all the while subservient to his main purport, of proving holiness to be the fruit and effect of faith.

I subjoin thus much upon that author, because though you desired my opinion of him, I remember that in my last, I rather left you to find it out by inference, than expressed it, as I ought to have done. I never met with a man who understood the plan of salvation better, or was more happy in explaining it.

W. C.

LETTER XXIV.

To Mrs. Cowper.

Huntingdon, April 3, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

You sent my friend Unwin home to us, charmed with your kind reception of him and with every thing he saw at the Park. Shall

I once more give you a peep into my vile and deceitful heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct, when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect, at first, that pride and vain glory had any share in it, but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him, I discovered, in that fruitful soil, the very root of the matter. You know I am a stranger here; all such are suspected characters; unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is matter of speculation in the place, whence I came, and to whom I belong.

Though my friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an inmate here, was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond, and has, since that time, received more convincing proofs of my *sponsibility*, yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it, by introducing him to one of my most splendid connexions; that when he hears me called, "*That fellow Cowper*," which has happened heretofore, he may be able, upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my gentlemanhood, and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh Pride! Pride! it deceives with the

subtlety of a serpent, and seems to walk erect, though it crawls upon the earth. How will it twist and twine itself about, to get from under the Cross, which it is the glory of our Christian calling to be able to bear with patience and good will. They who can guess at the heart of a stranger, and you especially, who are of a compassionate temper, will be more ready, perhaps, to excuse me, in this instance, than I can be to excuse myself. But, in good truth, it was abominable pride of heart, indignation, and vanity, and deserves no better name. How shall such a creature be admitted into those pure and sinless mansions, where nothing shall enter that defileth, did not the blood of Christ, applied by the hand of faith, take away the guilt of sin, and leave no spot or stain behind it? Oh what continual need have I of an Almighty, All-sufficient Saviour! I am glad you are acquainted so *particularly* with *all* the circumstances of my story, for I know that your secrecy and discretion may be trusted with any thing. A thread of mercy ran through all the intricate maze of those afflictive providencies, so mysterious to myself at the time, and which must ever remain so to all, who will not see what was the great design of them:

at the judgment seat of Christ, the whole shall be laid open. How is the rod of iron changed into a sceptre of love!

I thank you for the seeds; I have committed some of each sort to the ground, whence they will spring up like so many mementos to remind me of my friends at the Park.

W. C.

LETTER XXV.

To Mrs. COWPER.

Huntingdon, July 13, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

The news-paper has told you the truth. Poor Mr. Unwin being flung from his horse, as he was going to his church on Sunday morning, received a dreadful fracture on the back part of the scull, under which he languished till Thursday evening, and then died. This awful dispensation has left an impression upon our spirits, which will not presently be worn off. He died in a poor cottage, to which he was carried immediately

after his fall, about a mile from home, and his body could not be brought to his house, till the spirit was gone to him, who gave it. May it be a lesson to us to watch, since we know not the day, nor the hour, when our Lord cometh.

The effect of it upon my circumstances will only be a change of the place of my abode. For I shall still, by God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose behaviour to me, has always been that of a mother to a son. We know not yet where we shall settle, but we trust, that the Lord whom we seek, will go before us, and prepare a rest for us. We have employed our friend Haweis, Dr. Conyers of Helmsley, in Yorkshire, and Mr. Newton of Olney, to look out a place for us, but at present are entirely ignorant under which of the three we shall settle, or whether under either. I have written to my Aunt Madan, to desire Martin to assist us with his enquiries. It is probable we shall stay here till Michaelmas.

W. C.

LETTER XXVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Huntingdon, July 16, 1767.

DEAR JOE,

Your wishes, that the newspaper may have misinformed you, are vain. Mr. Unwin is dead, and died in the manner there mentioned. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning he was in perfect health, and as likely to live twenty years as either of us, and before ten was stretched speechless and senseless upon a flock bed, in a poor cottage, where (it being impossible to remove him) he died on Thursday evening. I heard his dying groans, the effect of great agony, for he was a strong man; and much convulsed in his last moments. The few short intervals of sense, that were indulged him, he spent in earnest prayer, and in expressions of a firm trust, and confidence in the only Saviour. To that strong hold we must all resort at last, if we would have hope in our death: when every other refuge fails, we are glad to fly to the only shelter, to which we can repair to any purpose; and happy is it for us, when the false ground we have chosen for ourselves

being broken under us, we find ourselves obliged to have recourse to the rock, which can never be shaken—when this is our lot, we receive great and undeserved mercy.

Our society will not break up, but we shall settle in some other place, where, is at present uncertain.

Yours,

W. C.

These tender and confidential letters describe, in the clearest light, the singularly peaceful and devout life of this amiable writer, during his residence at Huntingdon, and the melancholy accident, which occasioned his removal to a distant county. Time and chance now introduced to the notice of Cowper, the zealous and venerable friend, who became his intimate associate for many years, after having advised and assisted him in the important concern of fixing his future residence. Mr. Newton, then curate of Olney, in Buckinghamshire, had been requested by the late Dr. Conyers (who in taking his degree in divinity at Cambridge, had formed a friendship with young Mr. Unwin, and learned from him

the religious character of his Mother) to seize an opportunity, as he was passing through Huntingdon, of making a visit to an exemplary lady. This visit, (so important in its consequences to the destiny of Cowper!) happened to take place within a few days after the calamitous death of Mr. Unwin. As a change of scene appeared desirable, both to Mrs. Unwin, and to the interesting recluse, whom she had generously requested to continue under her care, Mr. Newton offered to assist them in removing to the pleasant and picturesque county in which he resided. They were willing to enter into the flock of a benevolent and animated pastor, whose ideas were so much in harmony with their own. He engaged for them a house at Olney, where they arrived on the fourteenth of October, 1767.

The time of Cowper, in his new situation, seems to have been chiefly devoted to religious contemplation, to social prayer, and to active charity. To this first of Christian virtues, his heart was eminently inclined, and Providence very graciously enabled him to exercise and enjoy it to an extent far superior to what his own scanty fortune appeared to allow. He was very far from inheriting opulence on the death of his father in 1756, and the singular

cast of his own mind was such, that nature seemed to have rendered it impossible for him, either to covet, or to acquire riches. His perfect exemption from worldly passions is forcibly displayed in the two following letters.

LETTER XXVII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Olney, June 16, 1768.

DEAR JOE,

I thank you for so full an answer to so empty an epistle. If Olney furnished any thing for your amusement, you should have it in return, but occurrences here are as scarce as cucumbers at Christmas.

I visited St. Alban's about a fortnight since in person, and I visit it every day in thought. The recollection of what passed there, and the consequences that followed it, fill my mind continually, and make the circumstances of a poor transient half spent life, so insipid and unaffecting, that I have no heart to think or write much about them. Whether the nation is worshiping Mr. Wilkes, or any other idol, is of little moment to one who hopes, and be-

lieves, that he shall shortly stand in the presence of the great and blessed God. I thank him, that he has given me such a deep, impressed, persuasion of this awful truth, as a thousand worlds would not purchase from me. It gives me a relish to every blessing, and makes every trouble light.

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

1769.

DEAR JOE,

Sir Thomas crosses the Alps, and Sir Cowper, for that is his title at Olney, prefers his home to any other spot of earth in the world. Horace, observing this difference of temper, in different persons, cried out a good many years ago, in the true spirit of poetry, "How much one man differs "from another!" This does not seem a very sublime exclamation in English, but I remember we were taught to admire it in the original.

My dear friend, I am obliged to you for your

invitation:-but being long accustomed to retirement, which I was always fond of, I am now more than ever unwilling to revisit those noisy and crowded scenes, which I never loved, and which I now abhor. I remember you with all the friendship, I ever professed, which is as much as I ever entertained for any man. But the strange and uncommon incidents of my life, have given an entire new turn to my whole character and conduct, and rendered me incapable of receiving pleasure from the same employments and amusements, of which I could readily partake in former days.

I love you, and yours, I thank you for your continued remembrance of me, and shall not cease to be their and your

Affectionate Friend,

And Servant,

W. C.

His retirement was ennobled by many private acts of beneficence, and his exemplary virtue was such, that the opulent sometimes delighted to make him their almoner. In his sequestered life at Olney, he ministered abundantly to the wants of the poor.

from a fund, with which he was supplied by that model of extensive and unostentatious philanthropy, the late John Thornton, Esq. whose name he has immortalized in his Poem on Charity, still honoring his memory by an additional tribute to his virtues, in the following unpublished Poem, written immediately on his decease, in the year 1790.

Poets attempt the noblest task they can,
Praising the Author of all Good in man;
And next commemorating worthies lost,
The dead, in whom that good abounded most.

Thee, therefore, of commercial fame, but more
Fam'd for thy probity, from shore to shore,
Thee, THORNTON, worthy in some page to shine,
As honest, and more eloquent than mine,
I mourn; or, since thrice happy thou must be,
The world, no longer thy abode, not thee;
Thee to deplore were grief mis-spent indeed;
It were to weep, that goodness has its meed,
That there is bliss prepar'd in yonder sky,
And glory for the virtuous, when they die.

What pleasure can the miser's fondled hoard
Or spendthrift's prodigal excess afford,
Sweet, as the privilege of healing woe
Suffer'd by virtue, combating below;

That privilege was thine; Heaven gave thee means
To illumine with delight the saddest scenes,
Till thy appearance chas'd the gloom, forlorn
As midnight, and despairing of a morn.
Thou had'st an industry in doing good,
Restless as his, who toils and sweats for food.
Av'rice in thee was the desire of wealth
By rust unperishable, or by stealth.
And if the genuine worth of gold depend
On application to its noblest end,
Thine had a value in the scales of Heaven,
Surpassing all, that mine, or mint, have given:
And tho' God made thee of a nature prone
To distribution, boundless, of thy own;
And still, by motives of religious force,
Impell'd thee more to that heroic course;
Yet was thy liberality discreet;
Nice in its choice, and of a temp'rate heat;
And, though in act unwearied, secret still,
As, in some solitude, the summer rill
Refreshes, where it winds, the faded green,
And cheers the drooping flowers, unheard, unseen.

Such was thy Charity; no sudden start,
After long sleep of passion in the heart,
But steadfast principle, and in its kind
Of close alliance with th' eternal mind;

Trac'd easily to its true source above,
To Him, whose works bespeak his nature, love.
Thy bounties all were Christian, and I make
This record of thee for the Gospel's sake;
That the incredulous themselves may see
Its use and power, exemplified in thee.

This simple and sublime eulogy was perfectly merited; and among the happiest actions of this truly liberal man, we may reckon his furnishing to a character so reserved, and so retired, as Cowper, the means of his enjoying the gratification of active and costly beneficence; a gratification, in which the sequestered poet had nobly indulged himself, before his acquaintance with Mr. Newton afforded him an opportunity of being concerned in distributing the private, yet extensive, bounty of an opulent and exemplary merchant.

Cowper, before he quitted St. Alban's, assumed the charge of a necessitous child, to extricate him from the perils of being educated by very profligate parents; he put him to school at Huntingdon, removed him, on his own removal, to Olney, and finally settled him as an apprentice at Oundle in Northamptonshire.

The warm, benevolent, and cheerful enthusiasm of Mr. Newton, induced his friend Cowper to participate so abundantly in his devout occupation, that the poet's time, and thoughts, were more and more engrossed by religious pursuits. He wrote many hymns, and occasionally directed the prayers of the poor. Where the nerves are tender, and the imagination tremblingly alive, any fervid excess in the exercise of the purest piety, may be attended with such perils to corporeal, and mental, health, as men, of a more firm and hardy fibre, would be far from apprehending. Perhaps the life that Cowper led, on his settling in Olney, had a tendency to increase the morbid propensity of his frame, though it was a life of admirable sanctity.

Absorbed as he was in devotion, he forgot not his distant friends, and particularly his amiable relation, and correspondent, of the Park-house, near Hartford. The following letter to that lady has no date, but it was probably written soon after his establishment at Olney: The remarkable memento in the Postscript, was undoubtedly introduced to counteract an idle rumour, arising from the circumstance of his having settled himself under the roof of a fe-

male friend, whose age, and whose virtues, he considered as sufficient securities to ensure her reputation.

LETTER XXIX.

To Mrs. COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I have not been behind hand in reproaching myself with neglect, but desire to take shame to myself for my unprofitableness in this, as well as in all other respects. I take the next immediate opportunity however of thanking you for yours, and of assuring you, that instead of being surprised at your silence, I rather wonder that you, or any of my friends, have any room left for so careless and negligent a correspondent in your memories. I am obliged to you for the intelligence you send me of my kindred, and rejoice to hear of their welfare. He who settles the bounds of our habitations, has at length cast our lot at a great distance from each other, but I do not therefore forget their former kindness to me, or cease to be interested in their well being. You live in the centre of a world I know you do not delight in. Happy

are you, my dear friend, in being able to discern the insufficiency of all it can afford, to fill and satisfy the desires of an immortal soul. That God, who created us for the enjoyment of himself, has determined in mercy that it shall fail us here, in order that the blessed result of all our enquiries after happiness in the creature, may be a warm pursuit, and a close attachment, to our true interests, in fellowship and communion with Him, through the name and mediation of a dear Redeemer. I bless his goodness, and grace, that I have any reason to hope I am a partaker with you in the desire after better things, than are to be found in a world polluted with sin, and therefore devoted to destruction. May he enable us both to consider our present life in its only true light, as an opportunity put into our hands to glorify him amongst men, by a conduct suited to his word and will. I am miserably defective in this holy and blessed art, but I hope there is at the bottom of all my sinful infirmities, a sincere desire to live just so long as I may be enabled, in some poor measure, to answer the end of my existence in this respect, and then to obey the summons, and attend him in a world, where they who are his servants here, shall pay him an unsinful obedience for ever.

Your dear Mother is too good to me, and puts a more charitable construction upon my silence than the fact will warrant. I am not better employed than I should be in corresponding with her. I have that within, which hinders me wretchedly, in every thing that I ought to do, but is prone to trifle, and let time, and every good thing run to waste. I hope however to write to her soon.

My love, and best wishes, attend Mr. Cowper, and all that enquire after me. May God be with you, to bless you, and do you good, by all his dispensations; don't forget me when you are speaking to our best Friend before his Mercy-seat.

Yours ever,

W. C.

N. B. *I am not married.*

In the year 1769, the lady to whom the preceding letters are addressed, was involved in domestic affliction; and the following, which the poet wrote to her on the occasion, is so full of genuine piety, and true pathos, that it would be an injury to his memory to suppress it.

LETTER XXX.

To Mrs. COWPER.

Olney, Aug. 31, 1769.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

A letter from your Brother Frederic brought me yesterday the most afflicting intelligence that has reached me these many years. I pray to God to comfort you, and to enable you to sustain this heavy stroke with that resignation to his will, which none but Himself can give, and which he gives to none but his own children. How blessed and happy is your lot, my dear friend, beyond the common lot of the greater part of mankind; that you know what it is to draw near to God in prayer, and are acquainted with a Throne of Grace! You have resources in the infinite love of a dear Redeemer, which are withheld from millions: and the promises of God, which are yea and amen in Jesus, are sufficient to answer all your necessities, and to sweeten the bitterest cup, which your heavenly Father will ever put into your hand. May He now give you liberty to drink at these wells of salvation, till you are filled with consolation and peace, in the midst of trouble. He has said, when thou

passest through the fire, I will be with thee, and when through the floods, they shall not overflow thee. You have need of such a word as this, and he knows your need of it, and the time of necessity is the time, when he will be sure to appear in behalf of those who trust in him. I bear you and yours upon my heart before him, night and day, for I never expect to hear of distress, which shall call upon me with a louder voice, to pray for the sufferer. I know the Lord hears me for myself, vile and sinful as I am, and believe, and am sure, that he will hear me for you also. He is the friend of the widow, and the father of the fatherless, even God in his holy habitation; in all our afflictions he is afflicted, and chastens us in his mercy. Surely he will sanctify this dispensation to you, do you great and everlasting good by it, make the world appear like dust and vanity in your sight, as it truly is, and open to your view the glories of a better country, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor pain; but God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes for ever. Oh that comfortable word! "I have chosen thee in the furnaces of affliction," so that our very sorrows are evidences of our calling, and he chastens us, because we are his children.

My dear Cousin, I commit you to the word of his Grace, and to the comforts of his holy Spirit. Your life is needful for your family, may God, in mercy to them, prolong it, and may he preserve you from the dangerous effects which a stroke like this, might have upon a frame so tender as yours. I grieve with you, I pray for you, could I do more, I would, but God must comfort you.

Yours, in our dear Lord Jesus,

W. C.

In the following year, the tender feelings of Cowper were called forth by family affliction, that pressed more immediately on himself; he was hurried to Cambridge by the dangerous illness of his Brother. An affection truly fraternal had ever subsisted between the brothers, and the reader will recollect what the poet has said, in one of his letters, concerning their social intercourse, while he resided at Huntingdon.

In the two first years of his residence at Olney, he had been repeatedly visited by Mr. John Cowper; and how cordially he returned that kindness, and

attention, will appear from the following letter, which was probably written in the chamber of the invalide, whom the writer so fervently wishes to restore.

LETTER XXXI.

To Mrs. COWPER.

March 5, 1770.

My Brother continues much as he was. His case is a very dangerous one. An imposthume of the liver, attended by an asthma and dropsy. The physician has little hope of his recovery, I believe I might say, none at all, only being a friend, he does not formally give him over, by ceasing to visit him, lest it should sink his spirits. For my own part I have no expectation of his recovery, except by a signal interposition of Providence in answer to prayer. His case is clearly out of the reach of medicine; but I have seen many a sickness healed, where the danger has been equally threatening, by the only physician of value. I doubt not he will have an interest in your prayers, as he has in the prayers of many. May the Lord incline his ear,

and give an answer of peace. I know it is good to be afflicted. I trust that you have found it so, and that under the teaching of God's own Spirit, we shall both be purified. It is the desire of my soul to seek a better country, where God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people: and where, looking back upon the ways, by which he has led us, we shall be filled with everlasting wonder, love, and praise.

I must add no more.

Yours ever,

W. C.

The sickness and death of his learned, pious, and affectionate brother, made a very strong impression on the tender heart and mind of Cowper——an impression so strong, that it induced him to write a narrative of the remarkable circumstances which occurred at the time. He sent a copy of this narrative to Mr. Newton. The paper is curious in every point of view, and so likely to awaken sentiments of piety in minds, where it may be most desirable, to have

them awakened, that Mr. Newton has thought it his duty to print it.

Here it is incumbent on me to introduce a brief account of the brother, who was regarded so tenderly. John Cowper was born in 1737, being designed for the church, he was privately educated by a clergyman; and became eminent for the extent and variety of his erudition in the university of Cambridge. His conduct and sentiments, as a minister of the Gospel, are copiously displayed by the poet in recording the remarkable close of his life. Bennet college, of which he was a fellow, was his usual residence, and it became the scene of his death, on the twentieth of March, 1770. Fraternal affection has executed a perfectly just and graceful description of his character, both in prose and verse. I transcribe both as highly honorable to these exemplary brethren, who may indeed be said, to have dwelt together in unity.

"He was a man" (says Cowper, in speaking of his deceased Brother) "of a most candid and in-"genuous spirit; his temper remarkably sweet, and "in his behaviour to me he had always manifested "an uncommon affection. His outward conduct so "far as it fell under my notice, or I could learn it

" by the report of others, was perfectly decent and
" unblamable. There was nothing vicious in any
" part of his practice; but being of a studious,
" thoughtful turn, he placed his chief delight in the
" acquisition of learning, and made such acquisi-
" tions in it, that he had but few rivals in that of a
" classical kind. He was critically skilled in the
" Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages; was begin-
" ning to make himself master of the Syriac, and
" perfectly understood the French and Italian, the
" latter of which he could speak fluently. Learned
" however as he was, he was easy and cheerful in
" his conversation, and entirely free from the stiff-
" ness, which is generally contracted by men devo-
" ted to such pursuits."

" I had a Brother once:
" Peace to the memory of a man of worth!
" A man of letters, and of manners too!
" Of manners sweet, as virtue always wears,
" When gay good humour dresses her in smiles!
" He grac'd a college, in which order yet
" Was sacred, and was honor'd, lov'd, and wept
" By more than one, themselves conspicuous there!"

Another interesting tribute to his memory, will be found in the following letter.

LETTER XXXII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

May 8, 1770.

DEAR JOE,

Your letter did not reach me till the last post, when I had not time to answer it. I left Cambridge immediately after my Brother's death.

I am obliged to you for the particular account you have sent me * * * * * * * * He, to whom I have surrendered myself, and all my concerns, hath otherwise appointed, and let his will be done. He gives me much, which he withholds from others, and if he was pleased to withhold all, that makes an outward difference, between me, and the poor mendicant in the street, it would still become me to say, his will be done.

It pleased God to cut short my Brother's connexions and expectations here, yet not without giving him lively and glorious views of a better happi-

ness, than any, he could propose to himself, in such a world as this. Notwithstanding his great learning (for he was one of the chief men in the university, in that respect) he was candid, and sincere, in his enquiries after truth. Though he could not come into my sentiments, when I first acquainted him with them, nor in the many conversations, which I afterward had with him, upon the subject, could he be brought to acquiesce in them as scriptural, and true, yet I had no sooner left St. Albans, than he began to study, with the deepest attention, those points, in which we differed, and to furnish himself with the best writers upon them. His mind was kept open to conviction for five years, during all which time, he laboured in this pursuit, with unwearied diligence, as leisure and opportunity were afforded. Amongst his dying words were these, "Brother, I thought you wrong, yet wanted to be-"lieve, as you did. I found myself not able to be-"lieve, yet always thought I should be one day "brought to do so." From the study of books, he was brought, upon his death-bed, to the study of himself, and there learnt to renounce his righteousness, and his own most amiable character, and to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God

by faith. With these views he was desirous of death. Satisfied of his interest in the blessing purchased by the blood of Christ, he prayed for death with earnestness, felt the approaches of it with joy, and died in peace.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C

The exquisite sensibility of Cowper, could not fail to suffer deeply on the loss of such a Brother; but it is the peculiar blessing of a religious turn of mind, that it serves as an antidote against the corrosive influence of sorrow. Devotion, if it had no other beneficial effect on the human character, would be still inestimable to man, as a medicine for the anguish he feels in losing the objects of his affection. How far it proved so in the present case, the reader will be enabled to judge, by a letter, in which Cowper describes his sensations on this awful event, to one of his favorite correspondents.

LETTER XXXIII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

Olney, June 7, 1770.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am obliged to you for sometimes thinking of an unseen friend, and bestowing a letter upon me. It gives me pleasure to hear from you, especially to find that our gracious Lord enables you to weather out the storms you meet with, and to cast anchor within the veil.

You judge rightly of the manner in which I have been affected, by the Lord's late dispensation towards my brother. I found in it cause of sorrow, that I had lost so near a relation, and one so deservedly dear to me, and that he left me just when our sentiments, upon the most interesting subject, became the same: But much more cause of joy, that it pleased God to give me clear and evident proof, that he had changed his heart, and adopted him into the number of his children. For this, I hold myself peculiarly bound to thank him, because he might have done all, that he was pleased to do for him, and yet have afforded him neither strength

nor opportunity to declare it. I doubt not that he enlightens the understandings, and works a gracious change in the hearts of many, in their last moments, whose surrounding friends are not made acquainted with it.

He told me, that from the time, he was first ordained, he began to be dissatisfied with his religious opinions, and to suspect, that there were greater things concealed in the Bible, than were generally believed, or allowed to be there. From the time, when I first visited him, after my release from St. Alban's, he began to read upon the subject. It was at that time I informed him of the views of divine truth, which I had received in that school of affliction. He laid what I said to heart, and began to furnish himself with the best writers upon the controverted points, whose works he read, with great diligence and attention, comparing them all the while with the Scripture. None ever truly, and ingenuously, sought the truth, but they found it. A spirit of earnest inquiry is the gift of God, who never says to any, seek ye my face in vain. Accordingly, about ten days before his death, it pleased the Lord to dispel all his doubts, and to reveal in his heart the knowledge of the Saviour, and to give him firm and un-

shaken peace, in the belief of his ability and willingness to save. As to the affair of the fortune-teller, he never mentioned it to me, nor was there any such paper found, as you mention. I looked over all his papers before I left the place, and had there been such a one, must have discovered it. I have heard the report from other quarters, but no other particulars, than that the woman foretold him, when he should die. I suppose there may be some truth in the matter, but whatever he might think of it, before his knowledge of the truth, and however extraordinary her predictions might really be, I am satisfied that he had then received far other views of the wisdom and majesty of God, than to suppose, that he would entrust his secret counsels to a vagrant, who did not mean, I suppose, to be understood to have received her intelligence from the Fountain of Light, but thought herself sufficiently honored by any, who would give her credit for a secret intercourse of this kind with the Prince of Darkness.

Mrs. Unwin is much obliged to you for your kind inquiry after her. She is well, I thank God, as usual, and sends her respects to you. Her Son is in the ministry, and has the living of Stock, in Essex. We were last week alarmed with an account of his

being dangerously ill; Mrs. Unwin went to see him, and in a few days left him out of danger.

W. C.

The letters of the afflicted poet, to this amiable and sympathetic relation, have already afforded to my reader an insight into the pure recesses of Cowper's wonderful mind, at some remarkable periods of his life, and if my reader's opinion of these letters is consonant to my own, he will feel concerned, as I do, to find a chasm of ten years, in this valuable correspondence; the more so as it was chiefly occasioned by a new, a long, and severe visitation of that mental malady, which repeatedly involved in calamitous oppression, the superior faculties of this interesting sufferer. His extreme depression seems not to have recurred immediately on the shock of his Brother's death. In the autumn of the year in which he sustained that affecting loss, he wrote the following serious, but animated letter to Mr. Hill.

LETTER XXXIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Sept. 25, 1770.

DEAR JOE,

I have not done conversing with terrestrial objects, though I should be happy were I able, to hold more continual converse with a friend above the skies. He has my heart, but he allows a corner in it, for all, who shew me kindness, and therefore one for you. The storm of sixty-three, made a wreck of the friendships, I had contracted in the course of many years, yours excepted, which has survived the tempest.

I thank you for your repeated invitation. Singular thanks are due to you for so *singular* an instance of your regard. I could not leave Olney, unless in a case of absolute necessity, without much inconvenience to myself and others.

W. C.

In his sequestered life, he seems to have been much consoled and entertained, by the society of his pious friend Mr. Newton, in whose religious pur-

suits, he appears to have taken an active part, by the composition of sixty-eight Hymns. * Mr. Newton wished, and expected, him to have contributed a much larger number, as he has declared in the Preface to that collection of Hymns, which contains these devotional effusions of Cowper, distinguished by the initial letter of his name. The volume, composed for the inhabitants of Olney, was the joint production of the divine and the poet, and intended as the former expressly says in his Preface, "As a "monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an "intimate and endeared friendship—With this "pleasing view," (continues Mr. Newton) "I en-"tered upon my part, which would have been "smaller, than it is, and the book would have ap-"peared much sooner and in a very different form, if "the wise, though mysterious, Providence of God, "had not seen fit to cross my wishes. We had not "proceeded far upon our proposed plan, before my "dear friend was prevented by a long and affecting "indisposition, from affording me any farther assist-"ance."—The severe illness of the poet, to which these expressions relate, began in 1773, and extended beyond the date of the Preface (from which they are quoted) February the fifteenth, 1779.

These social labours of the poet, with an exemplary man of God, for the purpose of promoting simple piety, among the lower classes of the people, must have been delightful in a high degree to the benevolent heart of Cowper; and I am persuaded he alludes to his own feelings on this subject, in the following passage from his Poem on Conversation.

True bliss, if man may reach it, is compos'd
Of hearts in union, mutually disclos'd:
And farewell else all hope of pure delight!
Those hearts should be reclaim'd, renew'd, upright;
Bad men, profaning friendship's hallow'd name,
Form, in its stead, a covenant of shame:
.....
.....
But souls, that carry on a blest exchange
Of joys, they meet with, in their heavenly range,
And with a fearless confidence, make known
The sorrows, sympathy esteems its own;
Daily derive increasing light and force
From such communion; in their pleasant course,
Feel less the journey's roughness, and its length;
Meet their opposers, with united strength;
And one in heart, in interest, and design,
Gird up each other, to the race divine.

Such fellowship in literary labour, for the noblest of purposes, must be delightful indeed, if at-

tended with success, and at all events, it is entitled to respect; yet it may be doubtful if the intense zeal, with which Cowper embarked in this fascinating pursuit, had not a dangerous tendency to undermine his very delicate health.

Such an apprehension naturally arises from a recollection of what medical writers, of great ability, have said, on the awful subject of mental derangement. Whenever the slightest tendency to that misfortune appears, it seems expedient to guard a tender spirit, from the attractions of Piety herself—So fearfully and wonderfully are we made, that man in all conditions ought perhaps to pray, that he never may be led to think of his Creator, and of his Redeemer either too lightly, or too intensely; since human misery is often seen to arise equally from an utter neglect of all spiritual concerns, and from a wild extravagance of devotion.

But if the charitable and religious zeal of the poet led him into any excesses of devotion, injurious to the extreme delicacy of his nervous system, he is only the more entitled to admiration and to pity. Indeed his genius, his virtues, and his misfortunes, were calculated to excite those tender and temperate passions in their purest state, and to the

highest degree.—It may be questioned, if any mortal could be more sincerely beloved and revered, than Cowper was, by those, who were best acquainted with his private hours.

The season was now arrived, when the firm friendship of Mrs. Unwin, was put to the severest of trials, and when her conduct was such, as to deserve those rare rewards of grateful attention and tenderness, which, when she herself became the victim of age and infirmity she received from that exemplary being, who considered himself indebted to her friendly vigilance for his life, and who never forgot an obligation, when his mind was itself.

In 1773, he sunk into such severe paroxysms of religious despondency, that he required an attendant of the most gentle, vigilant, and inflexible spirit. Such an attendant he found in that faithful guardian, whom he had professed to love as a mother, and who watched over him, during this long fit of depressive malady, extended through several years, with that perfect mixture of tenderness and fortitude, which constitutes the inestimable influence of maternal protection. I wish to pass rapidly over this calamitous period, and shall only observe, that nothing could surpass the sufferings of the patient, or excel

the care of the nurse. That meritorious care received from Heaven the most delightful of rewards, in seeing the pure and powerful mind, to whose restoration it had contributed so much, not only gradually restored to the common enjoyments of life, but successively endowed with new and marvellous funds of diversified talents, and courageous application.

The spirit of Cowper, emerged by slow degrees from its very deep dejection; and before his mind was sufficiently recovered to employ itself on literary composition, it sought, and found, much salutary amusement in educating a little group of tame hares. On his expressing a wish to divert himself by rearing a single leveret, the good-nature of his neighbours supplied him with three. The variety of their dispositions became a source of great entertainment to his compassionate and contemplative spirit. One of the trio, he has celebrated in "*The Task*," and a very animated minute account of this singular family, humanized, and described most admirably by himself, in prose, appeared first in the Gentleman's Magazine, and has been recently inserted in the second volume of his Poems.

His three tame hares, Mrs. Unwin, and Mr.

Newton, were, for a considerable time, the only companions of Cowper; but as Mr. Newton was removed to a distance from his afflicted friend, by preferment in London, to which he was presented by that liberal encourager of active piety, Mr. Thornton, the friendly divine, before he left Olney, in 1780, humanely triumphed over the strong reluctance of Cowper to see a stranger, and kindly introduced him to the regard, and good offices, of the Rev. Mr. Bull, of Newport-Pagnell, who, from that time, considering it as a duty to visit the invalide, once a fortnight, acquired, by degrees, his cordial and confidential esteem.

The affectionate temper of Cowper, inclined him particularly to exert his talents, at the request of his friends; even in seasons, when such exertion could hardly have been made, without a painful degree of self-command.

At the suggestion of Mr. Newton, we have seen him writing a series of Hymns; at the request of Mr. Bull, he translated several spiritual Songs, from the mystical poetry of Madame de la Mothe Guyon, the tender and fanciful enthusiast of France, whose talents and misfortunes, drew upon her a long series of persecution, from many acrimonious bigots,

and secured to her the friendship of the mild, and indulgent, Fenelon!

We shall perceive, as we advance, that the greater works of Cowper, were also written at the express desire of persons, whom he particularly regarded; and it may be remarked, to the honor of friendship, that he considered its influence, as the happiest inspiration; or to use his own expressive words,

> The poet's lyre, to fix his fame,
> Should be the poet's heart;
> Affection lights a brighter flame
> Than ever blaz'd by art.

The poetry of Cowper is in itself an admirable illustration of this maxim; and perhaps, the maxim may point to the prime source of that uncommon force and felicity, with which this most feeling poet commands the affection of his reader.

In delineating the life of an author, it seems the duty of biography to indicate the degree of influence, which the warmth of his heart, produced on the fertility of his mind. But those mingled flames of friendship and poetry, which were to burst forth with the most powerful effect, in the compositions of Cowper, were not yet kindled. His depressive

malady had suspended the exercise of his genius for several years; and precluded him from renewing his correspondence with the relation, whom he so cordially regarded, in Hartfordshire, except by brief letters, on pecuniary concerns.

The first of the letters very kindly imparted to me by Mr. Unwin, (after the first publication of this Life,) is a proof that the long-suffering recluse at Olney, had regained the free use of his admirable faculties, in the summer of 1778. In beginning to blend the letters to the Rev. William Unwin, with the former series of Cowper's correspondence, I cannot refrain from observing, that the affectionate esteem, and unbounded confidence, with which he most deservedly honored his young and amiable correspondent, give a peculiar charm to these letters, displaying, without a shadow of reserve, the whole heart and mind of the poet.

LETTER XXXV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 18, 1778.

DEAR UNWIN,

I feel myself much obliged to you for your kind intimation, and have given the sub-

ject of it all my best attention, both before I received your letter, and since. The result is, that I am persuaded it will be better not to write. I know the man and his disposition well, he is very liberal in his way of thinking, generous, and discerning. He is well aware of the tricks, that are played upon such occasions, and after fifteen years interruption of all intercourse between us, would translate my letter into this language—pray remember the poor. This would disgust him, because he would think our former intimacy disgraced by such an oblique application. He has not forgotten me, and if he had, there are those about him, who cannot come into his presence without reminding him of me, and he is also perfectly acquainted with my circumstances. It would perhaps give him pleasure to surprize me with a benefit, and if he means me such a favor, I should disappoint him by asking it.

I repeat my thanks for your suggestion; you see a part of my reasons for thus conducting myself; if we were together, I could give you more.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XXXVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 26, 1779.

I am obliged to you for the Poets, and though I little thought that I was translating so much money out of your pocket into the bookseller's, when I turned Prior's poem into Latin, yet I must needs say, that if you think it worth while to purchase the English Classics at all, you cannot possess yourself of them upon better terms. I have looked into some of the volumes, but, not having yet finished the Register, have merely looked into them. A few things I have met with, which if they had been burned the moment they were written, it would have been better for the Author, and at least as well for his readers. There is not much of this, but a little too much. I think it a pity the editor admitted any; the English Muse would have lost no credit by the omission of such trash. Some of them again, seem to me, to have but a very disputable right to a place among the Classics, and I am quite at a loss, when I see them in such company, to conjecture what is Dr. Johnson's idea, or defini-

tion of classical merit. But if he inserts the poems of some, who can hardly be said to deserve such an honor, the purchaser may comfort himself with the hope, that he will exclude none, that do.

W. C.

LETTER XXXVII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 21, 1779.

Amico mio, be pleased to buy me a glazier's diamond pencil. I have glazed the two frames, designed to receive my pine plants. But I cannot mend the kitchen windows, till by the help of that implement, I can reduce the glass to its proper dimensions. If I were a plumber, I should be a complete glazier, and possibly the happy time may come, when I shall be seen trudging away to the neighbouring towns with a shelf of glass hanging at my back. If government should impose another tax upon that commodity, I hardly know a business, in which a gentleman might more successfully employ himself. A Chinese, of ten times my fortune, would

avail himself of such an opportunity without scruple; and why should not I, who want money as much as any mandarin in China? Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed with rapture, "that he had "found the Emilius, who (he supposed) had sub-"sisted only in his own idea." I would recommend it to you to follow my example. You will presently qualify yourself for the task, and may not only amuse yourself at home, but may even exercise your skill in mending the church windows; which, as it would save money to the parish, would conduce, together with your other ministerial accomplishments, to make you extremely popular in the place.

I have eight pair of tame pigeons. When I first enter the garden in the morning, I find them perched upon the wall, waiting for their breakfast, for I feed them always upon the gravel-walk. If your wish should be accomplished, and you should find yourself furnished with the wings of a dove, I shall undoubtedly find you amongst them. Only be so good, if that should be the case, to announce yourself by some means or other. For I imagine your crop will require something better than tares to fill it.

Your Mother and I, last week, made a trip in a post-chaise to Gayhurst, the seat of Mr. Wright, about four miles off. He understood that I did not much affect strange faces, and sent over his servant on purpose to inform me, that he was going into Leicestershire, and that, if I chose to see the gardens, I might gratify myself, without danger of seeing the proprietor. I accepted the invitation, and was delighted with all I found there. The situation is happy, the gardens elegantly disposed, the hot-house in the most flourishing state, and the orange-trees the most captivating creatures of the kind I ever saw. A man, in short, had need have the talents of Cox or Langford, the auctioneers, to do the whole scene justice.

Our love attends you all.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XXXVIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 31, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wrote my last letter merely to inform you, that I had nothing to say, in answer

to which you have said nothing. I admire the propriety of your conduct, though I am a loser by it, I will endeavour to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's biography, for which I thank you: with one exception, and that a swinging one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. He has belaboured that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of every thing royal in his public, are the two colours, with which he has smeared all the canvas. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him, and it is well for Milton, that some sourness in his temper, is the only vice, with which his memory has been charged; it is evident enough, that if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his Muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sen-

tence of condemnation upon Lycidas, and has taken occasion, from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule (what is indeed ridiculous enough) the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if Lycidas was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity, that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped, by prejudice, against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever any thing so delightful as the music of the Paradise Lost? It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest, and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute. Variety without end, and never equalled, unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little, or nothing, to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank-verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation.

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room; our love attends you.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XXXIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 2, 1779.

My dear friend, how quick is the succession of human events! The cares of to-day are seldom the cares of to-morrow; and when we lie down at night, we may safely say, to most of our troubles—"Ye have done your worst, and we shall meet no more."

This observation was suggested to me by reading your last letter, which, though I have written since I received it, I have never answered. When that epistle passed under your pen, you were miserable about your tythes, and your imagination was hung round with pictures, that terrified you to such a degree, as made even the receipt of money burthensome. But it is all over now. You sent away your farmers in good humour, (for you can make people merry whenever you please): and now you have nothing to do, but to chink your purse, and laugh at what is past. Your delicacy makes you groan under that, which other men never feel, or feel but lightly. A fly, that settles upon the tip of the

nose, is troublesome; and this is a comparison adequate to the most, that mankind in general are sensible of, upon such tiny occasions. But the flies, that pester you, always get between your eye-lids, where the annoyance is almost insupportable.

I would follow your advice, and endeavour to furnish Lord North with a scheme of supplies for the ensuing year, if the difficulty I find in answering the call of my own emergencies, did not make me despair of satisfying those of the nation. I can say but this; if I had ten acres of land in the world, whereas I have not one, and in those ten acres should discover a gold mine, richer than all Mexico and Peru, when I had reserved a few ounces for my own annual supply, I would willingly give the rest to government. My ambition would be more gratified by annihilating the national incumbrances, than by going daily down to the bottom of a mine, to wallow in my own emolument. This is patriotism—you will allow; but, alas, this virtue is for the most part in the hands of those, who can do no good with it! He, that has but a single handful of it, catches so greedily at the first opportunity of growing rich, that his patriotism drops to the ground, and he grasps the gold instead of it. He that never meets with

such an opportunity holds it fast, in his clenched fist, and says—"Oh, how much good I would do, if I could!"

Your Mother says—"Pray send my dear love." There is hardly room to add mine, but you will suppose it.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XL.

To the Revd. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 27, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As you are pleased to desire my letters I am the more pleased with writing them; though, at the same time, I must needs testify my surprize, that you should think them worth receiving, as I seldom send one, that I think favorably of myself. This is not to be understood as an imputation upon your taste, or judgment, but as an encomium upon my own modesty, and humility, which I desire you to remark well. It is a just observation of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that though men of ordinary

talents, may be highly satisfied with their own productions, men of true genius never are. Whatever be their subject, they always seem to themselves, to fall short of it, even when they seem to others most to excel. And for this reason—because they have a certain sublime sense of perfection, which other men are strangers to, and which they themselves in their performances, are not able to exemplify. Your servant, Sir Joshua! I little thought of seeing you when I began, but as you have popped in, you are welcome.

When I wrote last, I was a little inclined to send you a copy of verses entitled the Modern Patriot, but was not quite pleased with a line or two, which I found it difficult to mend, therefore did not. At night I read Mr. Burke's speech, in the news-paper, and was so well pleased with his proposals for a reformation, and the temper in which he made them, that I began to think better of his cause, and burnt my verses. Such is the lot of the man, who writes upon the subject of the day; the aspect of affairs changes in an hour or two, and his opinion with it; what was just and well deserved satire in the morning, in the evening becomes a libel: the author commences his own judge, and while he condemns

with unrelenting severity, what he so lately approved, is sorry to find, that he has laid his leaf-gold upon touchwood, which crumbled away under his fingers. Alas! What can I do with my wit? I have not enough to do great things with, and these little things are so fugitive, that while a man catches at the subject, he is only filling his hand with smoke. I must do with it, as I do with my linnet; I keep him for the most part in a cage, but now and then set open the door, that he may whisk about the room a little, and then shut him up again. My whisking wit has produced the following, the subject of which is more important, than the manner in which I have treated it, seems to imply, but a fable may speak truth, and all truth is sterling; I only premise, that in the philosophical tract in the Register, I found it asserted, that the glow-worm is the nightingale's food.*

An officer of a regiment, part of which is quartered here, gave one of the soldiers leave to be drunk six weeks, in hopes of curing him by satiety——he *was* drunk six weeks, and is so still, as often as he can find an opportunity. One vice may swallow up

* This Letter contained the beautiful fable of the Nightingale and the Glow-worm.

another, but no coroner, in the state of Ethics, ever brought in his verdict, when a vice died, that it was —*felo de se.*

Thanks for all you have done, and all you intend; the biography will be particularly welcome.

Yours

W. C.

LETTER XLI.

To the Revd. JOHN NEWTON.

March 18, 1780.

I am obliged to you for the communication of your correspondence with—— It was impossible for any man, of any temper whatever, and however wedded to his own purpose, to resent so gentle and friendly an exhortation as you sent him. Men of lively imaginations, are not often remarkable for solidity of judgment. They have generally strong passions to bias it, and are led far away from their proper road, in pursuit of petty phantoms of their own creating. No law ever did

or can, effect what he has ascribed to that of Moses; it is reserved for mercy to subdue the corrupt inclinations of mankind, which threatenings, and penalties, through the depravity of the heart, have always had a tendency rather to inflame.

The love of power seems as natural to kings, as the desire of liberty is to their subjects; the excess of either is vicious, and tends to the ruin of both. There are many, I believe, who wish the present corrupt state of things dissolved, in hope, that the pure primitive constitution will spring up from the ruins. But it is not for man, by himself man, to bring order out of confusion: the progress from one to the other is not natural, much less necessary, and without the intervention of divine aid, impossible; and they, who are for making the hazardous experiment, would certainly find themselves disappointed.

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

LETTER XLII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 28, 1780.

My dear friend, I have heard nothing more from Mr. Newton, upon the subject you mention; but I dare say, that, having been given to expect the benefit of your nomination, in behalf of his nephew, he still depends upon it. His obligations to Mr. ——, have been so numerous, and so weighty, that, though he has, in a few instances, prevailed upon himself to recommend an object, now and then, to his patronage, he has very sparingly, if at all, exerted his interest, with him, in behalf of his own relations.

With respect to the advice, you are required to give to a young lady, that she may be properly instructed, in the manner of keeping the sabbath, I just subjoin a few hints, that have occurred to me, upon the occasion, not because I think you want them, but because it would seem unkind to withhold them. The sabbath then, I think, may be considered, first, as a commandment, no less binding, upon modern Christians, than upon antient Jews,

because the spiritual people amongst them, did not think it enough, to abstain from manual occupations upon that day, but, entering more deeply into the meaning of the precept, allotted those hours, they took from the world, to the cultivation of holiness, in their own souls, which ever was, and ever will be, a duty incumbent upon all, who ever heard of a sabbath, and is of perpetual obligation both upon Jews and Christians; (the commandment, therefore, injoins it; the prophets have also enforced it; and in many instances, both scriptual and modern, the breach of it has been punished, with a providential and judicial severity, that may make by-standers tremble): secondly, as a privilege, which you well know how to dilate upon, better than I can tell you; thirdly, as a sign of that covenant, by which believers are entitled to a rest, that yet remaineth; fourthly, as the *sine-quâ-non* of the Christian character; and upon this head, I should guard against being misunderstood to mean no more than two attendances upon public worship, which is a form, complied with by thousands, who never kept a sabbath in their lives. Consistence is necessary, to give substance and solidity to the whole. To sanctify the day at church, and to trifle it away out of church,

is profanation, and vitiates all. After all, could I ask my catechumen one short question—"Do you "love the day, or do you not? If you love it, you "will never inquire, how far you may safely deprive "yourself of the enjoyment of it. If you do not "love it, and you find yourself obliged in conscience "to acknowledge it, that is an alarming symptom, "and ought to make you tremble. If you do not "love it, then it is a weariness to you, and you wish "it was over. The ideas of labour, and rest, are "not more opposite to each other, than the idea "of a sabbath, and that dislike and disgust with "which it fills the souls of thousands, to be obliged "to keep it. It is worse than bodily labour."

W. C.

LETTER XLIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 6, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I never was, any more than yourself, a friend to pluralities; they are generally

found in the hands of the avaricious, whose insatiable hunger after preferment proves them unworthy of any at all. They attend much to the regular payment of their dues, but not at all to the spiritual interest of their parishioners. Having forgot their duty, or never known it, they differ in nothing from the laity, except their outward garb, and their exclusive right to the desk and pulpit. But when pluralities seek the man, instead of being sought by him, and when the man is honest, conscientious, and pious, careful to employ a substitute, in those respects, like himself, and not contented with this, will see with his own eyes, that the concerns of his parishes are decently and diligently administered; in that case, considering the present dearth of such characters in the ministry, I think it an event advantageous to the people, and much to be desired by all who regret the great, and apparent, want of sobriety and earnestness, among the clergy. A man, who does not seek a living merely as a pecuniary emolument, has no need, in my judgment, to refuse one because it is so. He means to do his duty, and by doing it, he earns his wages. The two rectories being contiguous to each other, and following easily under the care of one pastor, and both so near to

Stock, that you can visit them without difficulty, as often as you please, I see no reasonable objection, nor does your Mother. As to the wry-mouthed sneers, and illiberal misconstructions of the censorious, I know no better shield to guard you against them, than what you are already furnished with—a clear and unoffended conscience.

I am obliged to you for what you said upon the subject of book-buying, and am very fond of availing myself of another man's pocket, when I can do it creditably to myself, and without injury to him. Amusements are necessary, in a retirement like mine, especially in such a sable state of mind as I labour under. The necessity of amusement makes me sometimes write verses--it made me a carpenter, a bird-cage maker, a gardener—and has lately taught me to draw, and to draw too with such surprizing proficiency in the art, considering my total ignorance of it two months ago, that when I shew your Mother my productions, she is all admiration and applause.

You need never fear the communication of what you entrust to us in confidence. You know your Mother's delicacy in this point sufficiently, and as for me, I once wrote a Connoisseur upon the

subject of secret keeping, and from that day to this, I believe I have never divulged one.

We are much pleased with Mr. Newton's application to you for a charity sermon, and what he said upon that subject in his last letter, "that he "was glad of an opportunity to give you that proof "of his regard."

Believe me yours,

W. C.

LETTER XLIV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, April 16, 1780.

Since I wrote last we have had a visit from ——. I did not feel myself vehemently disposed to receive him, with that complaisance, from which a stranger generally infers, that he is welcome. By his manner, which was rather bold than easy, I judged that there was no occasion for it, and that it was a trifle, which, if he did not meet with, neither would he feel the want of: He has the air of a travelled man, but not of a travelled gen-

tleman; is quite delivered from that reserve, which is so common an ingredient in the English character, yet does not open himself gently and gradually, as men of polite behaviour do, but bursts upon you all at once. He talks very loud, and when our poor little robins hear a great noise, they are immediately seized with an ambition to surpass it——the increase of their vociferation, occasioned an increase of his, and his in return, acted as a stimulus upon theirs—neither side entertained a thought of giving up the contest, which became continually more interesting to our ears, during the whole visit. The birds however survived it, and so did we. They, perhaps, flatter themselves, they gained a complete victory, but I believe Mr. —— would have killed them both in another hour.

W. C.

LETTER XLV.

To the Rev. J. NEWTON.

May 3, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

You indulge me in such a variety of subjects, and allow me such a latitude of excursion

in this scribbling employment, that I have no excuse for silence. I am much obliged to you, for swallowing such boluses, as I send you, for the sake of my gilding, and verily believe, I am the only man alive, from whom they would be welcome, to a palate like yours. I wish I could make them more splendid, than they are, more alluring to the eye, at least, if not more pleasing to the taste, but my leaf-gold is tarnished, and has received such a tinge from the vapours, that are ever brooding over my mind, that I think it no small proof of your partiality to me, that you will read my letters. I am not fond of long-winded metaphors, I have always observed, that they halt at the latter-end of their progress, and so does mine. I deal much in ink indeed, but not such ink as is employed by poets, and writers of essays. Mine is a harmless fluid, and guilty of no deceptions. but such as may prevail, without the least injury to the person imposed on. I draw mountains, valleys, woods, and streams, and ducks, and dab-chicks. I admire them myself, and Mrs. Unwin admires them; and her praise, and my praise put together are fame enough for me. Oh! I could spend whole days, and moon-light nights, in feeding upon a lovely prospect! My eyes drink the rivers as they flow. If

every human being upon earth could think for one quarter of an hour, as I have done for many years, there might, perhaps, be many miserable men among them, but not an unwakened one would be found, from the Arctic to the Antartic circle. At present, the difference between them and me, is greatly to their advantage. I delight in baubles, and know them to be so, for rested in, and viewed, without a reference to their author, what is the earth, what are the planets, what is the sun itself, but a bauble? Better for a man never to have seen them, or to see them with the eyes of a brute, stupid and unconscious of what he beholds, than not to be able to say, "The maker of all these wonders is my friend!" Their eyes have never been opened, to see that they are trifles, mine have been, and will be 'till they are closed for ever. They think a fine estate, a large conservatory, a hot-house, rich, as a West-Indian garden, things of consequence; visit them with pleasure, and muse upon them with ten times more. I am pleased with a frame of four lights, doubtful whether the few pines it contains, will ever be worth a farthing; amuse myself with a greenhouse, which Lord Bute's gardener could take upon his back, and walk away with, and when I have paid

it the accustomed visit, and watered it, and given it air, I say to myself——"This is not mine, 'tis a "play-thing lent me for the present, I must leave "it soon."

W. C.

LETTER XLVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Olney, May 6, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am much obliged to you for your speedy answer to my queries. I know less of the law than a country attorney, yet sometimes I think I have almost as much business. My former connexion with the profession has got wind, and though I earnestly profess, and protest, and proclaim it abroad, that I know nothing of the matter, they cannot be persuaded to believe, that a head once endowed with a legal periwig, can ever be deficient in those natural endowments, it is supposed to cover. I have had the good fortune to be once or twice in

the right, which added to the cheapness of a gratuitous counsel, has advanced my credit to a degree I never expected to attain, in the capacity of a lawyer. Indeed if two of the wisest in the science of jurisprudence, may give opposite opinions, on the same point, which does not unfrequently happen, it seems to be a matter of indifference, whether a man answers by rule, or at a venture. He that stumbles upon the right side of the question, is just as useful to his client, as he that arrives at the same end by regular approaches, and is conducted to the mark he aims at, by the greatest authorities.

* * * *

These violent attacks of a distemper so often fatal are very alarming, to all who esteem and respect the Chancellor, as he deserves. A life of confinement, and of anxious attention to important objects, where the habit is bilious, to such a terrible degree, threatens to be but a short one; and I wish he may not be made a text, for men of reflection, to moralize upon, affording a conspicuous instance of the transient and fading nature of all human accomplishments and attainments.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER XLVII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 8, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

My scribbling humour has of late been entirely absorbed, in the passion for landscape drawing. It is a most amusing art, and, like every other art, requires much practice, and attention.

Nil sine multo
Vita labore dedit mortalibus.

Excellence is providentially placed beyond the reach of indolence, that success may be the reward of industry and that idleness may be punished with obscurity and disgrace. So long as I am pleased with an employment, I am capable of unwearied application, because my feelings are all of the intense kind. I never received a *little* pleasure from any thing in my life; if I am delighted, it is in the extreme. The unhappy consequences of this temperature is that my attachment to any occupation, seldom outlives the novelty of it. That nerve of my imagination, that feels the touch of any particular amuse-

ment, twangs under the energy of the pressure with so much vehemence, that it soon becomes sensible of weariness and fatigue. Hence I draw an unfavorable prognostic, and expect that I shall shortly be constrained to look out for something else. Then, perhaps, I may string the harp again, and be able to comply with your demand.

Now for the visit you propose to pay us, and propose *not* to pay us: the hope of which plays upon your paper, like a jack-o-lantern upon the ceiling. This is no mean simile, for Virgil (you remember) uses it. 'Tis here, 'tis there, it vanishes, it returns, it dazzles you, a cloud interposes, and it is gone. However just the comparison, I hope you will contrive to spoil it, and that your final determination will be to come. As to the masons you expect, bring them with you —bring brick, bring mortar, bring every thing, that would oppose itself to your journey—all shall be welcome. I have a green-house that is too small, come and enlarge it; build me a pinery; repair the garden-wall, that has great need of your assistance; do any thing, you cannot do too much; so far from thinking you, and your train, troublesome, we shall rejoice to see you, upon these, or upon any other

terms you can propose. But to be serious—you will do well to consider, that a long summer is before you —that the party will not have such another opportunity to meet, this great while; that you may finish your masonry long enough before winter, though you should not begin this month, but that you cannot always find your Brother and Sister Powley, at Olney. These, and some other considerations, such as the desire we have to see you, and the pleasure we expect from seeing you all together, may, and, I think, ought to overcome your scruples.

From a general recollection of Lord Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, I thought, (and I remember, I told you so,) that there was a striking resemblance between that period, and the present. But I am now reading, and have read, three volumes of Hume's History, one of which, is engrossed intirely by that subject. There, I see reason to alter my opinion, and the seeming resemblance has dissappeared, upon a more particular information. Charles succeeded to a long train of arbitrary princes, whose subjects had tamely acquiesced in the despotism of their masters, 'till their privileges were all forgot. He did but tread in their steps, and exemplify the principles, in which he had been brought up, when

he oppresed his people. But just at that time, unhappily for the monarch, the subject began to see, and to see, that he had a right to property and freedom. This marks a sufficient difference between the disputes of that day, and the present. But there was another main cause of that rebellion, which, at this time, does not operate at all. The king was devoted to the hierarchy; his subjects were puritans, and would not bear it. Every circumstance of ecclesiastical order and discipline, was an abomination to them, and in his esteem, an indispensible duty. and, though at last, he was obliged to give up many things, he would not abolish episcopacy, and 'till that were done, his concessions could have no conciliating effect. These two concurring causes, were indeed sufficient to set three kingdoms in a flame. But they subsist not now, nor any other, I hope, notwithstanding the bustle made by the patriots, equal to the production of such terrible events.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C

At this time, Cowper's attention was irresistibly recalled to his Cousin, Mrs. Cowper, by hearing that

she was deeply afflicted; and he wrote to her the following letter, on the loss of her Brother, Frederic Madan, a soldier, who died in America, after having distinguished himself, by poetical talents, as well as by military virtues.

LETTER XLVIII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

May 10, 1780.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I do not write to comfort you: that office is not likely to be well performed by one, who has no comfort for himself; nor to comply with an impertinent ceremony, which in general might well be spared upon such occasions: but because I would not seem indifferent to the concerns of those, I have so much reason to esteem, and love. If I did not sorrow for your Brother's death, I should expect that nobody would for mine; when I knew him, he was much beloved, and I doubt not continued to be so. To live and die together, is the lot of a few happy families, who hardly know what a separation means, and one sepulchre serves them all; but the ashes of our kindred are dispersed indeed. Whether the American Gulph has swallow-

ed up any other of my relations, I know not; it has made many mourners.

Believe me, my dear Cousin, though after a long silence, which perhaps, nothing less than the present concern, could have prevailed with me to interrupt, as much as ever,

Your affectionate kinsman

W. C.

LETTER XLIX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

May 10, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If authors could have lived to adjust, and authenticate their own text, a commentator would have been an useless creature. For instance—if Dr. Bentley had found, or opined that he had found, the word *tube*, where it seemed to present itself to you, and had judged the subject worthy of his critical acumen, he would either have justified the corrupt reading, or have substituted some invention of his own, in defence of which he would have exerted all his polemical abilities, and

have quarrelled with half the literati in Europe. Then suppose the writer himself, as in the present case, to interpose, with a gentle whisper, thus—— "If you look again, Doctor, you will perceive, that "what appears to you to be *tube*, is neither more, "nor less, than the mono-syllable *ink*, but I wrote "it in great haste, and the want of sufficient preci- "sion in the character, has occasioned your mistake: "*you* will be especially satisfied, when you see the "sense elucidated by the explanation."——But I question whether the Doctor would quit his ground, or allow any author to be a competent judge in his own case. The world, however, would acquiesce immediately, and vote the critic useless.

James Andrews, who is my Michael Angelo, pays me many compliments, on my success, in the art of drawing, but I have not yet the vanity to think myself qualified to furnish your apartment. If I should ever attain to the degree of self-opinion, requisite to such an undertaking, I shall labour at it with pleasure. I can only say, though I hope not with the affected modesty of the above-mentioned Dr. Bentley, who said the same thing,

Me quoque dicunt
Vatem pastores. Sed non Ego credulus illis.

A crow, rook, or raven, has built a nest in one of the young elm-trees, at the side of Mrs. Aspray's orchard. In the violent storm, that blew yesterday morning, I saw it agitated to a degree, that seemed to threaten its immediate destruction, and versified the following thoughts upon the occasion.*

W. C.

LETTER L.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 8, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is possible I might have indulged myself in the pleasure of writing to you, without waiting for a letter from you, but for a reason, which you will not easily guess. Your Mother communicated to me, the satisfaction you expressed in my correspondence, that you thought me entertaining and clever, and so forth:—now you must know, I love praise dearly, especially from the judicious, and those who have so much delicacy them-

* Cowper's Fable of the Raven concluded this letter.

selves, as not to offend mine in giving it. But then, I found this consequence attending, or likely to attend, the eulogium you bestowed——if my friend thought me witty before, he shall think me ten times more witty hereafter——where I joked once, I will joke five times, and, for one sensible remark, I will send him a dozen. Now this foolish vanity would have spoilt me quite, and would have made me as disgusting a letter-writer, as Pope, who seems to have thought, that unless a sentence was well turned, and every period pointed with some conceit, it was not worth the carriage. Accordingly he is to me, except in a very few instances, the most disagreeable maker of epistles, that ever I met with. I was willing, therefore, to wait 'till the impression your commendation had made, upon the foolish part of me, was worn off, that I might scribble away as usual, and write my uppermost thoughts, and those only.

You are better skilled in ecclesiastical law than I am——Mrs. P. desires me to inform her, whether a parson can be obliged to take an apprentice. For some of her husband's opposers, at D——, threaten to clap one upon him. Now I think it would be rather hard, if clergymen, who are not allowed to

exercise any handicraft whatever, should be subject to such an imposition. If Mr. P. was a cord-wainer or a breeches-maker, all the week, and a preacher only on Sundays, it would seem reasonable enough, in that case, that he should take an apprentice, if he chose it. But even then, in my poor judgment, he ought to be left to his option. If they mean by an apprentice, a pupil, whom they will oblige him to hew into a parson, and after chipping away the block that hides the minister within, to qualify him to stand erect in a pulpit—that indeed, is another consideration—But still, we live in a free country, and I cannot bring myself even to suspect, that an English divine can possibly be liable to such compulsion. Ask your Uncle however; for he is wiser in these things, than either of us.

I thank your for your two inscriptions, and like the last the best; the thought is just, and fine, —but the two last lines are sadly damaged, by the monkish jingle of *peperit* and *reperit*. I have not yet translated them, nor do I promise to do it, though at some idle hour perhaps I may. In return, I send you a translation, of a simile, in the Paradise Lost. —Not having that Poem at hand, I cannot refer you to the book, and page, but you may hunt

for it, if you think it worth your while.——It begins———

" So when, from mountain tops, the dusky clouds
" ascending, &c."

Quales aërii montis de vertice nubes
Cum surgunt, et jam Boreæ tumida ora quiêrunt,
Cœlum hilares abdit, spissâ caligine, vultus:
Tùm si jucundo tandem sol prodeat ore,
Et croceo montes et pascua lumine tingat,
Gaudent omnia, aves mulcent consentibus agros,
Balatuque ovium colles, vallesque resultant.

If you spy any fault in my Latin, tell me, for I am sometimes in doubt, but as I told you, when you was here, I have not a Latin book in the world to consult, or correct a mistake by; and some years have past since I was a school-boy.

AN ENGLISH VERSIFICATION OF A THOUGHT, THAT POPPED INTO MY HEAD, ABOUT TWO MONTHS SINCE.

Sweet stream! that winds through yonder glade——
Apt emblem of a virtuous maid!——

Silent, and chaste, she steals along,
Far from the world's gay, busy throng;
With gentle, yet prevailing force,
Intent upon her destin'd course:
Graceful, and useful, all she does,
Blessing, and blest, where'er she goes:
Pure-bosom'd, as that watery glass,
And Heav'n reflected in her face!

Now this is not so exclusively applicable to a maiden, as to be the sole property of your Sister Shuttleworth. If you look at Mrs. Unwin, you will see, that she has not lost her right, to this just praise, by marrying you.

Your Mother sends her love to all, and mine comes jogging along by the side of it.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

June 12, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

We accept it as an effort of your friendship, that you could prevail with your-

self, in a time of such terror and distress, to send us repeated accounts of your's, and Mrs. Newton's welfare; you supposed, with reason enough, that we should be apprehensive for your safety, situated, as you were, apparently, within the reach of so much danger. We rejoice that you have escaped it all, and that, except the anxiety, which you must have felt, both for yourselves and others, you have suffered nothing upon this dreadful occasion. A metropolis in flames, and a nation in ruins, are subjects of contemplation for such a mind as yours, that will leave a lasting impression behind them. It is well that the design died in the execution, and will be buried, I hope, never to rise again, in the ashes of its own combustion. There is a melancholy pleasure, in looking back upon such a scene, arising from a comparison of possibilities, with facts; the enormous bulk of the intended mischief, with the abortive and partial accomplishment of it; much was done, more indeed than could have been supposed practicable, in a well-regulated city, not unfurnished with a military force for its protection. But surprise, and astonishment, seem, at first, to have struck every nerve of the police with a palsy, and to have disarmed government of all its powers.

I congratulate you upon the wisdom, that withheld you from entering yourself a member of the Protestant association. Your friends, who did so, have reason enough to regret their doing it, even though they should never be called upon. Innocent as they are, and they who know them cannot doubt of their being perfectly so, it is likely to bring an odium on the profession they make, that will not soon be forgotten. Neither is it possible, for a quiet, inoffensive man, to discover, on a sudden, that his zeal has carried him into such company, without being to the last degree, shocked at his imprudence. *Their* religion was an honorable mantle, like that of Elijah, but the majority wore cloaks of Guy Fawkes's time, and meant nothing so little as what they pretended.

W. C.

LETTER LII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 18, 1780.

Reverend, and dear William,

the affairs of kingdoms, and the concerns of indivi-

duals, are variegated alike with the checker-work of joy and sorrow. The news of a great acquisition in America, has succeeded to terrible tumults in London and the beams of prosperity are now playing upon the smoke of that conflagration, which so lately terrified the whole land. These sudden changes, which are matter of every man's observation, and may therefore, always be reasonably expected, serve to hold up the chin of despondency above water, and preserve mankind in general from the sin and misery, of accounting existence a burden, not to be endured —an evil, we should be sure to encounter, if we were not warranted to look for a bright reverse of our most afflictive experiences. The Spaniards were sick of the war, at the very commencement of it; and I hope, that by this time, the French themselves, begin to find themselves a little indisposed, if not desirous of peace, which that restless, and meddling temper of theirs, is incapable of desiring for its own sake. But is it true, that this detestable plot was an egg laid in France, and hatched in London, under the influence of French corruption?—*Nam te scire, deos quoniam propius contingis, oportet.* The offspring has the features of such a parent, and yet, without the clearest proof of the fact, I would not willingly charge

upon a civilized nation, what perhaps the most barbarous would abhor the thought of. I no sooner saw the surmise however, in the paper, than I immediately began to write Latin verses upon the occasion. "An odd effect" you will say, "of such a circumstance:"—But an effect nevertheless, that whatever has, at any time, moved my passions, whether pleasantly, or otherwise, has always had upon me: were I to express what I feel, upon such occasions, in prose it would be verbose, inflated and disgusting. I therefore, have recourse to verse, as a suitable vehicle for the most vehement expressions my thoughts suggest to me. What I have written, I did not write so much for the comfort of the English, as for the mortification of the French. You will immediately perceive, therefore, that I have been labouring in vain, and that this bouncing explosion is likely to spend itself in the air. For I have no means of circulating what follows, through all the French territories; and unless that, or something like it, can be done, my indignation will be entirely fruitless. Tell me how I can convey it into Sartine's pocket, or who will lay it upon his desk for me. But read it first, and unless you think it pointed enough to sting the Gaul to the quick, burn it.

In seditionem, horrendam, corruptelis Gallicis, ut fertur, Londini nuper exortam.

Perfida, crudelis, victa et lymphata furore,
Non armis, laurum Gallia fraude petit.
Venalem prettio plebem conducit, et urit
Undique privatas patriciasque domos.
Nequicquàm conata suâ, fœdissima spernat
Posse tamen nostrâ nos superare manu.
Gallia, vana struis! Precibus nunc utere! Vinces,
Nam mites timidis, supplicibusque sumus.

I have lately exercised my ingenuity in contriving an exercise for yours, and have composed a Riddle, which, if it does not make you laugh before you have solved it, will probably do it afterwards. I would transcribe it now, but am really so fatigued with writing, that unless I knew you had a quinsy, and that a fit of laughter might possibly save your life, I could not prevail with myself to do it.

What could you possibly mean, slender as you are by sallying out upon your two walking sticks at two in the morning, in the midst of such a tumult? We admire your prowess, but cannot commend your prudence.

Our love attends you all, collectively and individually.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 22, 1780.

My dear friend, a word or two in answer to two or three questions of yours, which I have hitherto taken no notice of. I am not in a scribbling mood, and shall therefore make no excursions to amuse either myself or you. The needful will be as much as I can manage at present—the playful must wait another opportunity.

I thank you for your offer of Robertson, but I have more reading upon my hands at this present writing, than I shall get rid of in a twelvemonth; and this moment recollect, that I have seen it already. He is an author that I admire much, with one exception, that I think his style is too laboured. Hume, as an historian, pleases me more.

I have read just enough of the *Biographia Britannica*, to say, that I have tasted it, and have no doubt but I shall like it. I am pretty much in the garden at this season of the year, so read but little. In summer-time I am as giddy-headed as a boy, and can settle to nothing. Winter condenses me, and makes me lumpish, and sober; and then I can read all day long.

For the same reasons, I have no need of the landscapes at present; when I want them I will renew my application, and repeat the description, but it will hardly be before October.

Before I rose this morning, I composed the three following Stanzas; I send them because I like them pretty well myself; and if you should not, you must accept this handsome compliment as an amends for their deficiencies. You may print the lines, if you judge them worth it.*

I have only time to add love, &c. and my two initials.

W. C.

* Verses on the burning of Lord Mansfield's house.

LETTER LIV

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

June 23, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your reflections upon the state of London, the sins and enormities of that great city, while you had a distant view of it from Greenwich, seem to have been prophetic of the heavy stroke that fell upon it just after. Man often prophecies without knowing it; a spirit speaks by him which is not his own, though he does not at that time suspect, that he is under the influence of any other. Did he foresee, what is always foreseen by him who dictates, what he supposes to be his own, he would suffer by anticipation, as well as by consequence; and wish perhaps as ardently for the happy ignorance, to which he is at present so much indebted, as some have foolishly, and inconsiderately done for a knowledge, that would be but another name for misery.

And why have I said all this? especially to you, who have hitherto said it to me—not because I had the least desire of informing a wiser man than

myself, but because the observation was naturally suggested by the recollection of your letter, and that letter, though not the last, happened to be uppermost in my mind. I can compare this mind of mine to nothing that resembles it more, than to a board that is under the carpenter's plane, (I mean while I am writing to you) the shavings are my uppermost thoughts; after a few strokes of the tool, it acquires a new surface, this again upon a repetition of his task, he takes off, and a new surface still succeeds——whether the shavings of the present day, will be worth your acceptance, I know not, I am unfortunately made neither of cedar nor of mahogany, but *Truncus ficulnus, inutile lignum*—consequently, though I should be planed, 'till I am as thin as a wafer, it will be but rubbish to the last.

It is not strange that you should be the subject of a false report, for the sword of slander, like that of war, devours one as well as another; and a blameless character is particularly delicious to its unsparing appetite. But that you should be the object of such a report, you who meddle less with the designs of government, than almost any man that lives under it, this is strange indeed. It is well however, when they who account it good sport to traduce

the reputation of another, invent a story that refutes itself. I wonder they do not always endeavour to accommodate their fiction, to the real character of the person; their tale would then, at least, have an air of probability, and it might cost a peaceable good man much more trouble to disprove it. But, perhaps, it would not be easy to discern, what part of your conduct lies more open to such an attempt, than another, or what it is that you either say or do, at any time, that presents a fair opportunity to the most ingenious slanderer, to slip in a falsehood, between your words, or actions, that shall seem to be of a piece with either. You hate compliment, I know, but by your leave, this is not one—it is a truth—worse and worse—now I have praised you indeed—well you must thank yourself for it, it was absolutely done without the least intention on my part, and proceeded from a pen that, as far as I can remember, was never guilty of flattery, since I knew how to hold it.—He that slanders me, paints me blacker than I am, and he that flatters me, whiter—they both daub me, and when I look in the glass of conscience, I see myself disguised by both: I had as lief my taylor should sew gingerbread nuts on my coat instead of buttons, as that any man should

call my Bristol stone a diamond. The taylor's trick would not at all embellish my suit, nor the flatterer's make me at all the richer. I never make a present to my friend, of what I dislike myself. Ergo, (I have reached the conclusion at last) I did not mean to flatter you.

We have sent a petition to Lord Dartmouth, by this post, praying him to interfere in parliament, in behalf of the poor Lace-makers. I say we, because I have signed it; Mr. G. drew it up, Mr. —— did not think it grammatical, therefore would not sign it. Yet I think, Priscian himself would have pardoned the manner, for the sake of the matter. I dare say if his Lordship does not comply with the prayer of it, it will not be because he thinks it of more consequence to write grammatically, than that the poor should eat, but for some better reason.

My love to all under your roof.

Yours

W. C.

LETTER LV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 2, 1780.

Carissime, I am glad of your confidence, and have reason to hope I shall never abuse it. If you trust me with a secret, I am hermetically sealed; and if you call for the exercise of my judgment, such as it is, I am never freakish or wanton in the use of it, much less mischievous and malignant. Critics, I believe, do not often stand so clear of these vices as I do. I like your Epitaph, except that I doubt the propriety of the word *immaturus*; which, I think, is rather applicable to fruits than flowers, and except the last pentameter, the assertion it contains being rather too obvious a thought to finish with; not that I think an epitaph should be pointed, like an epigram. But still there is a closeness of thought, and expression, necessary in the conclusion of all these little things, that they may leave an agreeable flavour upon the palate. Whatever is short, should be nervous, masculine, and compact. Little men are so; and little poems should be so; because, where the work is short, the author has no

right to the plea of weariness, and laziness is never admitted as an available excuse in any thing. Now you know my opinion, you will very likely improve upon my improvement, and alter my alterations for the better. To touch, and retouch, is, though some writers boast of negligence, and others would be ashamed to show their foul copies, the secret of almost all good writing, especially in verse. I am never weary of it myself, and if you would take as much pains as I do, you would have no need to ask for my corrections.

Hic sepultus est
Inter suorum lacrymas
GULIELMUS NORTHCOT,
Gulielmi et Mariæ filius,
Unicus, unicé dilectus,
Qui floris ritu succissus est semihiantis,
Aprilis, die septimo,
1780, Æt. 10.

Care, vale! Sed non æternúm, care, valeto!
Namque iterúm tecum, sim modó dignus, ero:
Tum nihil amplexus poterit divellere nostros,
Nec tu marcesces, nec lacrymabor ego.

Having an English translation of it by me, I send it, though it may be of no use.

Farewell! "But not for ever," Hope replies,
Trace but his steps, and meet him in the skies!
There nothing shall renew our parting pain,
Thou shalt not wither, nor I weep again.

The Stanzas, that I sent you, are maiden ones, having never been seen by any eye but your Mother's and your own.

If you send me franks, I shall write longer letters; *Valete, sicut et nos valemus! Amate, sicut et nos amamus.*

The next letter, to Mr. Hill, affords a striking proof of Cowper's compassionate feelings toward the poor around him.

LETTER LVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

July 8, 1780.

MON AMI,

If you ever take the tip of the Chancellor's ear between your finger and

thumb, you can hardly improve the opportunity to better purpose, than if you should whisper into it the voice of compassion and lenity to the Lace-makers. I am an eye witness to their poverty, and do know that hundreds in this little town, are upon the point of starving, and that the most unremitting industry, is but barely sufficient to keep them from it. I know that the bill, by which they would have been so fatally affected, is thrown out, but Lord Stormont threatens them with another; and if another, like it, should pass, they are undone. We lately sent a petition to Lord Dartmouth; I signed it, and am sure the contents are true. The purport of it was to inform him, that there are very near one thousand two hundred Lace-makers, in this beggarly town, the most of whom had reason enough, while the bill was in agitation, to look upon every loaf they bought, as the last they should ever be able to earn. I can never think it good policy to incur the certain inconvenience of ruining thirty thousand, in order to prevent a remote and possible damage though to a much greater number. The measure is like a scythe, and the poor Lace-makers are the sickly crop, that trembles before the edge of it. The prospect of a peace with America, is like the streak of dawn in their hori-

son, but this bill is like a black cloud behind it, that threatens their hope of a comfortable day with utter extinction.

I did not perceive 'till this moment, that I had tacked two similies together, a practice, which though warranted by the example of Homer, and allowed in an epic poem, is rather luxuriant and licentious in a letter; lest I should add another, I conclude.

W. C.

LETTER LVII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 11, 1780.

I account myself sufficiently commended for my Latin exercise, by the number of translations it has undergone. That which you distinguished in the margin, by the title of "better," was the production of a friend, and, except that, for a modest reason, he omitted the third couplet, I think it a good one. To finish the group, I have translated it myself; and, though I would not wish you to give it to the world, for more reasons than one, es-

pecially lest some French hero should call me to account for it—I add it on the other side. An author ought to be the best judge of his own meaning; and, whether I have succeeded or not, I cannot but wish, that where a translator is wanted, the writer was always to be his own.

False, cruel, disappointed, stung to the heart,
France quits the warrior's, for the assassin's part;
To dirty hands, a dirty bribe conveys,
Bids the low street, and lofty palace blaze.
Her sons too weak to vanquish us alone,
She hires the worst, and basest of our own.
Kneel, France! a suppliant conquers us with ease,
We always spare a coward on his knees.

I have often wondered that Dryden's illustrious epigram on Milton, (in my mind the second best that ever was made) has never been translated into Latin, for the admiration of the learned in other countries. I have at last presumed to venture upon the task myself. The great closeness of the original which is equal in that respect, to the most compact Latin I ever saw, made it extremely difficult,

Tres tria, sed longè distantia, sæcula vates
Ostentant tribus é gentibus eximios.
Græcia sublimem, cum majestate disertum
Roma tulit, felix Anglia utrique parem.
Partubus ex binis Natura exhausta, coacta est,
Tertius ut fieret, consociare duos.

I have not one bright thought upon the Chancellor's recovery; nor can I strike off so much as one sparkling atom from that brilliant subject. It is not when I will, nor upon what I will, but as a thought happens to occur to me; and then I versify, whether I will or not. I never write but for my amusement; and what I write is sure to answer that end, if it answers no other. If, besides this purpose, the more desirable one of entertaining you be effected, I then receive double fruit of my labour, and consider this produce of it as a second crop, the more valuable, because less expected. But when I have once remitted a composition to you, I have done with it. It is pretty certain, that I shall never read it, or think of it again. From that moment I have constituted you sole judge of its accomplishments, if it has any, and of its defects, which it is sure to have.

For this reason I decline answering the ques-

tion, with which you concluded your last, and cannot persuade myself to enter into a critical examen of the two pieces upon Lord Mansfield's loss, either with respect to their intrinsic, or comparative merit; and, indeed, after having rather discouraged that use of them, which you had designed, there is no occasion for it.

W. C.

The poet's affectionate effort in renewing his correspondence with Mrs. Cowper, to whom he had been accustomed to pour forth his heart without reserve, appears to have had a beneficial effect on his reviving spirits. His pathetic letter to that lady was followed, in the course of two months, by a letter of a more lively cast, in which the reader will find some touches of his native humour, and a vein of pleasantry peculiar to himself.

LETTER LVIII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

July 20, 1780.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Mr. Newton having desired me to be of the party, I am come to meet him. You

see me sixteen years older, at the least, than when I saw you last; but the effects of time seem to have taken place rather on the outside of my head, than within it. What was brown, is become grey, but what was foolish, remains foolish still. Green fruit must rot before it ripens, if the season is such as to afford it nothing but cold winds and dark clouds, that interrupt every ray of sunshine. My days steal away silently, and march on (as poor mad Lear would have made his soldiers march) as if they were shod with felt; not so silently, but that I hear them; yet were it not that I am always listening to their flight, having no infirmity that I had not, when I was much younger, I should deceive myself with an imagination that I am still young.

I am fond of writing, as an amusement, but do not always find it one. Being rather scantily furnished with subjects, that are good for any thing, and corresponding only with those, who have no relish for such as are good for nothing, I often find myself reduced to the necessity, the disagreeable necessity, of writing about myself. This does not mend the matter much, for though in a description of my own condition, I discover abundant materials to

employ my pen upon, yet as the task is not very agreeable to *me*, so I am sufficiently aware, that it is likely to prove irksome to others. A painter, who should confine himself, in the exercise of his art, to the drawing of his own picture, must be a wonderful coxcomb, if he did not soon grow sick of his occupation, and be peculiarly fortunate, if he did not make others as sick as himself.

Remote as your dwelling is from the late scene of riot and confusion, I hope that though you could not but hear the report, you heard no more, and that the roarings of the mad multitude did not reach you. That was a day of terror to the innocent, and the present is a day of still greater terror to the guilty. The law was, for a few moments, like an arrow in the quiver, seemed to be of no use, and did no execution; now it is an arrow upon the string, and many, who despised it lately, are trembling, as they stand before the point of it.

I have talked more already than I have formerly done in three visits—you remember my taciturnity, never to be forgotten by those who knew me; not to depart entirely from what might be, for aught I know, the most shining part of my cha-

racter—I here shut my mouth, make my bow, and return to Olney.

W. C.

LETTER LIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 27, 1780.

My dear friend, as two men sit silent, after having exhausted all their topics of conversation; one says—"It is very fine weather,"——and the other says—"Yes;"——one blows his nose, and the other rubs his eye-brows: (by the way, this is very much in Homer's manner,) such seems to be the case beween you and me. After a silence of some days, I wrote you a long something, that (I suppose) was nothing to the purpose, because it has not afforded you materials for an answer. Nevertheless, as it often happens in the case above-stated, one of the distressed parties, being deeply sensible of the aukwardness of a dumb duet, breaks silence again, and resolves to speak, though he has nothing to say, so it fares with me. I am

with you again in the form of an epistle, though considering my present emptiness, I have reason to fear, that your only joy upon the occasion will be, that it is conveyed to you in a frank.

When I began, I expected no interruption. But if I had expected interruption without end, I should have been less disappointed. First came the barber; who, after having embellished the outside of my head, has left the inside just as unfurnished as he found it. Then came Olney bridge, not into the house, but into the conversation. The cause relating to it, was tried on Tuesday at Buckingham. The judge directed the jury to find a verdict favorable to Olney. The jury consisted of one knave, and eleven fools. The last-mentioned followed the aforementioned, as sheep follow a bell-weather, and decided in direct opposition to the said judge. Then a flaw was discovered in the indictment. The indictment was quashed, and an order made for a new trial. The new trial will be in the King's Bench, where said knave, and said fools, will have nothing to do with it. So the men of Olney fling up their caps, and assure themselves of a complete victory. A victory will save me, and your Mother, many shillings, perhaps some pounds, which, except that

it has afforded me a subject to write upon, was the only reason, why I said so much about it. I know you take an interest in all that concerns us; and will consequently rejoice with us, in the prospect of an event in which we are concerned so nearly.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER LX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

July 30, 1780.

MY DEAR SIR,

You may think perhaps that I deal more liberally with Mr. Unwin, in the way of poetical export, than I do with you, and I believe, you have reason——the truth is this——If I walked the streets with a fiddle under my arm, I should never think of performing before the window of a privy counsellor, or a chief justice, but should rather make free with ears more likely to be open to such amusement. The trifles I produce in this way are indeed such trifles, that I cannot think them season-

able presents for you. Mr. Unwin himself would not be offended, if I was to tell him, that there is this difference between him and Mr. Newton; that the latter is already an apostle, while he himself is only undergoing the business of incubation, with a hope that he may be hatched in time. When my Muse comes forth arrayed in sables, at least in a robe of graver cast, I make no scruple to direct her to my friend at Hoxton. This has been one reason why I have so long delayed the Riddle. But lest I should seem to set a value upon it, that I do not, by making it an object of still further enquiry, here it comes.

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told,
I am lawful, unlawful——a duty, a fault,
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yielded with pleasure——when taken by force.

W. C.

LETTER LXI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 6, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You like to hear from me—This is a very good reason why I should write—but I have nothing to say—This seems equally a good reason why I should not—Yet if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me——"Mr. Cowper, you "have not spoke since I came in, have you resolved "never to speak again?" It would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the summons, I should plead inability as my best, and only excuse. And this by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand that a letter may be written upon any thing or nothing, just as that any thing or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate, and doubt, whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he

shall ever reach the end of it; for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed, not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before, but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving, as a postillion does, having once set out, never to stop, 'till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say——"My good sir, a man has no right to do either." But it is to be hoped, that the present century, has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last, and so good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the mean time, to think when we can, and to write, whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are.

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another na-

tion, almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the gothic porch, smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens, and high walls, their box-edgings, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people, who resembled us so little in their taste, should resemble us in any thing else. But in every thing else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly, and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve, and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk stockings, has left human nature just were it found it. The inside of the man at least, has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims, are just what they ever were. They wear perhaps a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore; for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior, but in every other respect, a modern is only an ancient in a different dress.

W. C.

LETTER LXII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

August 21, 1780.

The following occurrence

ought not to be passed over in silence, in a place where so few notable ones are to be met with. Last Wednesday night, while we were at supper, between the hours of eight and nine, I heard an unusual noise in the back-parlour, as if one of the hares was entangled, and endeavouring to disengage herself. I was just going to rise from table, when it ceased. In about five minutes, a voice on the outside of the parlour door, enquired if one of my hares had got away. I immediately rushed into the next room and found that my poor favorite puss had made her escape. She had gnawed in sunder the strings of a lattice work, with which I thought I had sufficiently secured the window, and which I preferred to any other sort of blind, because it admitted plenty of air. From thence I hastened to the kitchen, where I saw the redoubtable Thomas Freeman, who told me, that having seen her, just after she dropped into the street, he attempted to cover her with his hat, but she screamed out, and leaped directly over his head. I then desired him to pursue as fast as possible, and added Richard Coleman to the chace, as being nimbler, and carrying less weight, than Thomas; not expecting to see her again, but desirous to learn, if pos-

sible, what became of her. In something less than an hour, Richard returned, almost breathless, with the following account. That soon after he began to run, he left Tom behind him, and came in sight of a most numerous hunt, of men, women, children and dogs; that he did his best to keep back the dogs, and presently outstripped the crowd, so that the race was at last disputed between himself and puss——she ran right through the town, and down the lane that leads to Dropshort—a little before she came to the house, he got the start and turned her; she pushed for the town again, and soon after she entered it, sought shelter in Mr. Wagstaff's tan-yard, adjoining to old Mr. Drake's——Sturges's harvest-men were at supper, and saw her from the opposite side of the way. There she encountered the tan-pits full of water, and while she was struggling out of one pit, and plunging into another, and almost drowned, one of the men drew her out by the ears, and secured her. She was then well washed in a bucket, to get the lime out of her coat, and brought home in a sack, at ten o'clock.

This frolic cost us four shillings, but you may believe we did not grudge a farthing of it. The poor creature received only a little hurt in one of her

claws, and in one of her ears, and is now almost as well as ever.

I do not call this an answer to your letter, but such as it is, I send it, presuming upon that interest, which I know you take in my minutest concerns, which I cannot express better than in the words of Terence, a little varied——*Nihil mei a te alienum putas.*

Yours my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXIII.

To Mrs. COWPER.

August 31, 1780.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am obliged to you for your long letter, which did not seem so, and for your short one, which was more than I had any reason to expect. Short as it was, it conveyed to me two interesting articles of intelligence. An account of your recovering from a fever, and of Lady Cowper's death. The latter was, I suppose, to be expected, for by what remembrance I have of her Ladyship, who was never much acquainted with her, she had reached those years, that are always found upon the

borders of another world. As for you, your time of life is comparatively of a youthful date. You may think of death as much as you please (you cannot think of it too much) but I hope you wll live to think of it many years.

It costs me not much difficulty to suppose, that my friends who were already grown old, when I saw them last, are old still, but it costs me a good deal sometimes to think of those, who were at that time young, as being older than they were. Not having been an eye-witness of the change, that time has made in them, and my former idea of them not being corrected by observation, it remains the same; my memory presents me with this image unimpaired, and while it retains the resemblance of what they were, forgets, that, by this time, the picture may have lost much of its likeness, through the alteration, that succeeding years have made in the original. I know not what impressions Time may have made upon your person, for while his claws (as our grannams called them) strike deep furrows in some faces, he seems to sheath them with much tenderness, as if fearful of doing injury, to others. But though an enemy to the person, he is a friend to the mind, and you have found him so. Though, even in this respect, his treatment

of us depends upon what he meets with at our hands; if we use him well, and listen to his admonitions, he is a friend indeed, but otherwise the worst of enemies, who takes from us daily something that we valued, and gives us nothing better in its stead. It is well with them, who like you, can stand a tip-toe on the mountain top of human life, look down with pleasure upon the valley they have passed, and sometimes stretch their wings in joyful hope of a happy flight into Eternity. Yet a little while, and your hope will be accomplished.

When you can favor me with a little account of your own family, without inconvenience, I shall be glad to receive it, for though separated from my kindred by little more than half a century of miles, I know as little of their concerns, as if oceans, and continents were interposed between us.

Yours,

My dear Cousin,

W. C.

LETTER LXIV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 3, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad you are so provident, and that while you are young, you have furnished yourself with the means of comfort in old age. Your crutch and your pipe, may be of use to you, (and may they be so) should your years be extended to an antediluvian date, and for your perfect accomodation, you seem to want nothing but a clerk called Snuffle, and a sexton of the name of Skeleton, to make your ministerial equipage complete.

I think I have read as much of the first volume of the Biographia, as I shall ever read. I find it very amusing; more so perhaps, than it would have been, had they sifted their characters with more exactness, and admitted none but those, who had in some way or other, entitled themselves to immortality, by deserving well of the public. Such a compilation, would perhaps have been more judicious, though I confess it would have afforded less

variety. The priests and monks of earlier, and the doctors of later days, who have signalized themselves by nothing, but a controversial pamphlet, long since thrown by, and never to be perused again, might have been forgotten, without injury, or loss to the national character for learning or genius. This observation suggested to me the following lines, which may serve to illustrate my meaning, and at the same time to give my criticism a sprightlier air.

Oh fond attempt to give a deathless lot
To names ignoble, born to be forgot!
In vain recorded in historic page,
They court the notice of a future age;
Those twinkling, tiny, lustres of the land,
Drop one by one, from fame's neglecting hand;
Lethean gulphs receive them as they fall,
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all.
So when a child (as playful children use)
Has burnt to cinder a stale last-year's news,
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire,
There goes my lady, and there goes the 'squire,
There goes the parson——Oh illustrious spark!
And there——scarce less illustrious——goes the clerk!

Virgil admits none but worthies into the Elysian Fields; I cannot recollect the lines in which

he describes them all, but these in particular I well remember——

> Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo,
> Inventas aut qui vitam excoluère per artes.

A chaste and scrupulous conduct like his, would well become the writer of national biography.—But enough of this.

Our respects attend Miss Shuttleworth, with many thanks for her intended present. Some purses derive all their value from their contents, but these will have an intrinsic value of their own, and though mine should be often empty, which is not an improbable supposition, I shall still esteem it highly on its own account.

If you could meet with a second-hand Virgil, ditto Homer, both Iliad and Odyssey, together with a Clavis, for I have no Lexicon, and all tolerably cheap, I shall be obliged to you, if you will make the purchase.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 7, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

As many gentlemen as there are in the world, who have children, and heads capable of reflecting upon the important subject of their education, so many opinions there are about it; and many of them just and sensible, though almost all differing from each other. With respect to the education of boys, I think, they are generally made to draw in Latin and Greek trammels too soon. It is pleasing no doubt to a parent, to see his child already in some sort a proficient in those languages, at an age, when most others are entirely ignorant of them; but hence it often happens, that a boy, who could construe a fable of Æsop, at six or seven years of age, having exhausted his little stock of attention and diligence, in making that notable acquisition, grows weary of his task, conceives a dislike for study, and perhaps makes but a very indifferent progress afterwards. The mind and body have, in this respect, a striking resemblance of each other. In

childhood they are both nimble, but not strong; they can skip, and frisk about with a wonderful agility, but hard labour spoils them both. In maturer years they become less active, but more vigorous, more capable of a fixt application, and can make themselves sport with that, which a little earlier would have affected them with intolerable fatigue. I should recommend it to you, therefore, (but after all you must judge for yourself) to allot the two next years of little John's scholarship to writing and arithmetic, together with which, for variety's sake, and because it is capable of being formed into an amusement, I would mingle geography, (a science which if not attended to betimes, is seldom made an object of much consideration;) essentially necessary to the accomplishment of a gentleman, yet, as I know (by sad experience) imperfectly, if at all, inculcated in the schools. Lord Spencer's son, when he was four years of age, knew the situation of every kingdom, country, city, river, and remarkable mountain in the world. For this attainment, which I suppose his father had never made, he was indebted to a plaything; having been accustomed to amuse himself with those maps,

which are cut into several compartments, so as to be thrown into a heap of confusion, that they may be put together again with an exact coincidence of all their angles and bearings, so as to form a perfect whole.

If he begins Latin and Greek at eight, or even at nine years of age, it is surely soon enough. Seven years, the usual allowance for these acquisitions, are more than sufficient for the purpose, especially with his readiness in learning; for you would hardly wish to have him qualified for the university before fifteen, a period, in my mind, much too early for it, and when he could hardly be trusted there without the utmost danger to his morals. Upon the whole, you will perceive, that in my judgment, the difficulty, as well as the wisdom, consists more in bridling in, and keeping back, a boy of his parts, than in pushing him forward. If, therefore, at the end of the two next years, instead of putting a grammar into his hand, you should allow him to amuse himself with some agreeable writers upon the subject of natural philosophy, for another year, I think it would answer well. There is a book called Cosmotheoria Puerilis, there are Durham's Physico and Astro-the-

ology, together with several others in the same manner, very intelligible even to a child, and full of useful instruction.

W. C.

LETTER LXVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Sept. 17, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You desire my further thoughts on the subject of education. I send you such as had for the most part occurred to me, when I wrote last, but could not be comprised in a single letter. They are indeed on a different branch of this interesting theme, but not less important than the former.

I think it your happiness, and wish you to think it so yourself, that you are, in every respect, qualified for the task of instructing your son, and preparing him for the university, without committing him to the care of a stranger. In my judgment, a domestic education deserves the preference to a

public one, on an hundred accounts, which I have neither time nor room to mention. I shall only touch upon two or three, that I cannot but consider as having a right to your most earnest attention.

In a public school, or indeed in any school, his morals are sure to be but little attended to, and his religion not at all. If he can catch the love of virtue from the fine things, that are spoken of it in the classics, and the love of holiness from the customary attendance upon such preaching as he is likely to hear, it will be well; but I am sure you have had too many opportunities to observe the inefficacy of such means, to expect any such advantage from them. In the mean time, the more powerful influence of bad example, and perhaps bad company, will continually counterwork these only preservatives he can meet with, and may possibly send him home to you, at the end of five or six years, such as you will be sorry to see him. You escaped indeed the contagion yourself, but a few instances of happy exemption from a general malady, are not sufficient warrant to conclude, that it is therefore not infectious, or may be encountered without danger.

You have seen too much of the world, and are a man of too much reflection, not to have obser-

ved, that in proportion as the sons of a family approach to years of maturity, they lose a sense of obligation to their parents, and seem at last, almost divested of that tender affection, which the nearest of all relations seems to demand from them. I have often observed it myself, and have always thought I could sufficiently account for it, without laying all the blame upon the children. While they continue in their parents' house, they are every day obliged, and every day reminded how much it is their interest, as well as duty, to be obliging and affectionate in return. But at eight or nine years of age, the boy goes to school. From that moment he becomes a stranger in his father's house. The course of parental kindness is interrupted. The smiles of his mother, those tender admonitions, and the solicitous care of both his parents, are no longer before his eyes——year after year he feels himself more and more detached from them, 'till at last, he is so effectually weaned from the connexion, as to find himself happier any where than in their company.

I should have been glad of a frank for this letter, for I have said but little, of what I could say, upon this subject, and perhaps I may not be able to

catch it by the end again. If I can, I shall add to it hereafter.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXVII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 5, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Now for the sequel—you have anticipated one of my arguments in favor of a private education, therefore I need say but little about it. The folly of supposing that the mother-tongue, in some respects the most difficult of all tongues, may be acquired without a teacher, is predominant in all the public schools, that I have ever heard of. To pronounce it well, to speak, and to write it with fluency and elegance, are no easy attainments; not one in fifty of those, who pass through Westminster and Eton, arrive at any remarkable proficiency in these accomplishments; and they that do, are more indebted to their own study, and application for it, than to any instruction received there. In

general, there is nothing so pedantic as the style of a school-boy, if he aims at any style at all, and if he does not, he is of course inelegant, and perhaps ungrammatical. A defect, no doubt, in great measure, owing to want of cultivation, for the same lad that is often commended for his Latin, frequently would deserve to be whipped for his English, if the fault were not more his master's than his own. I know not where this evil is so likely to be prevented as at home—supposing always, nevertheless, (which is the case in your instance) that the boy's parents, and their acquaintance, are persons of elegance and taste themselves. For to converse with those, who converse with propriety, and to be directed to such authors as have refined and improved the language by their productions, are advantages which he cannot elsewhere enjoy in an equal degree. And though it requires some time to regulate the taste, and fix the judgment, and these effects must be gradually wrought even upon the best understanding, yet I suppose, much less time will be necesecary for the purpose, than could at first be imagined, because the opportunities of improvement are continual.

A public education is often recommended as the most effectual remedy for that bashful and awk-

ward restraint, so epidemical among the youth of our country. But I verily believe, that instead of being a cure, it is often the cause of it. For seven or eight years of his life, the boy has hardly seen or conversed with a man, or a woman, except the maids at his boarding house. A gentleman or a lady are consequently such novelties to him, that he is perfectly at a loss to know what sort of behaviour he should preserve before them. He plays with his buttons, or the strings of his hat, he blows his nose, and hangs down his head, is conscious of his own deficiency to a degree, that makes him quite unhappy, and trembles lest any one should speak to him, because that would quite overwhelm him. Is not all this miserable shyness the effect of his education? To me it appears to be so. If he saw good company every day, he would never be terrified at the sight of it, and a room full of ladies and gentlemen would alarm him no more then the chairs they sit on. Such is the effect of custom.

I need add nothing further on this subject, because I believe little John is as likely to be exempted from this weakness as most young gentlemen we shall meet with. He seems to have his father's spirit in this respect, in whom I could never discern

the least trace of bashfulness, though I have often heard him complain of it. Under your management, and the influence of your example, I think he can hardly fail to escape it. If he does, he escapes that which has made many a man uncomfortable for life; and ruined not a few, by forcing them into mean and dishonorable company, where only they could be free and cheerful.

Connexions formed at school, are said to be lasting, and often beneficial. There are two or three stories of this kind upon record, which would not be so constantly cited as they are, whenever this subject happens to be mentioned, if the chronicle that preserves their remembrance, had many besides to boast of. For my own part, I found such friendships, though warm enough in their commencement surprisingly liable to extinction; and of seven or eight, whom I had selected for intimates, out of about three-hundred, in ten years time, not one was left me. The truth is, that there may be, and often is, an attachment of one boy to another, that looks very like a friendship, and while they are in circumstances, that enable them mutually to oblige, and to assist each other, promises well, and bids fair to be lasting. But they are no sooner separated from each

other, by entering into the world at large, than other connexions, and new employments, in which they no longer share together, efface the remembrance of what passed in earlier days, and they become strangers to each other for ever. Add to this, the *man* frequently differs so much from the *boy;* his principles, manners, temper, and conduct, undergo so great an alteration, that we no longer recognize in him our old playfellow, but find him utterly unworthy, and unfit for the place he once held in our affections.

To close this article, as I did the last, by applying myself immediately to the present concern ——little John is happily placed above all occasion for dependance on all such precarious hopes, and need not be sent to school in quest of some great men in embryo, who may possible make his fortune.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXVIII.

To Mrs. NEWTON.

Oct. 5, 1780.

DEAR MADAM,

When a lady speaks, it is not civil to make her wait a week for an answer——I re-

ceived your Letter within this hour, and foreseeing that the garden will engross much of my time for some days to come, have seized the present opportunity to acknowledge it. I congratulate you on Mr. Newton's safe arrival at Ramsgate, making no doubt but that he reached that place without difficulty or danger, the road thither from Canterbury, being so good as to afford room for neither. He has now a view of the element, with which he was once so familiar, but which, I think, he has not seen for many years. The sight of his old acquaintance, will revive in his mind, a pleasing recollection of past deliverances, and when he looks at him from the beach, he may say—— "You have formerly given me trou-"ble enough, but I have cast anchor now, where "your billows can never reach me."——It is happy for him that he can say so.

Mrs. Unwin returns you many thanks for your anxiety on her account. Her health is considerably mended upon the whole, so as to afford us a hope that it will be established.

Our love attends you.

Yours, dear Madam,

W. C.

LETTER LXIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 9, 1780.

I wrote the following last summer. The tragical occasion of it really happened at the next house to ours. I am glad when I can find a subject to work upon; a lapidary, I suppose, accounts it a laborious part of his business to rub away the roughness of the stone; but it is my amusement, and if, after all the polishing I can give it, it discovers some little lustre, I think myself well rewarded for my pains.*

I shall charge you a half-penny a-piece for every copy I send you, the short as well as the long. This is a sort of after-clap you little expected, but I cannot possibly afford them at a cheaper rate. If this method of raising money had occurred to me sooner, I should have made the bargain sooner: but am glad I have hit upon it at last. It will be a considerable encouragement to my muse, and act as a powerful stimulus to my industry. If the

* Verses on a Goldfinch, starved to death in a cage.

American war should last much longer, I may be obliged to raise my price, but this I shall not do without a real occasion for it—it depends much upon Lord North's conduct in the article of supplies—if he imposes an additional tax on any thing that I deal in, the necessity of this measure, on my part, will be so apparent, that I dare say you will not dispute it.

W. C.

The following letter to Mr. Hill, contains a poem already printed in the Works of Cowper; but the reader will probably be gratified, in finding a little favorite piece of pleasantry introduced to him, as it was originally dispatched by the author, for the amusement of a friend.

LETTER LXX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

December 25, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weary with rather a long walk in the snow, I am not likely to write a very

sprightly letter, or to produce any thing that may cheer this gloomy season, unless I have recourse to my pocket-book, where perhaps I may find something to transcribe; something that was written before the sun had taken leave of our hemisphere, and when I was less fatigued than I am at present.

Happy is the man who knows just so much of the law, as to make himself a little merry now and then with the solemnity of juridical proceedings. I have heard of common law judgements before now, indeed have been present at the delivery of some, that according to my poor apprehension, while they paid the utmost respect to the letter of the statute, have departed widely from the spirit of it, and being governed entirely by the point of law, have left equity, reason, and common-sense behind them at an infinite distance. You will judge whether the following report of a case, drawn up by myself, be not a proof and illustration of this satirical assertion.

NOSE--PLAINTIFF;

EYES — DEFENDANTS.

1

Between Nose and Eyes a sad contest arose,
The Spectacles set them unhappily wrong;
The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,
To which the said Spectacles ought to belong.

2

So the Tongue was the lawyer, and argued the cause,
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning,
While chief baron Ear, sat to balance the laws,
So fam'd for his talents at nicely discerning.

3

"In behalf of the Nose, it will quickly appear,
"And your lordship," he said, "will undoubtedly find,
"That the Nose has had Spectacles always in wear,
"Which amounts to possession, time out of mind."

4

Then holding the Spectacles up to the court,
"Your lordship observes, they are made with a straddle,
"As wide as the ridge of the Nose is, in short,
"Design'd to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

5

" Again, would your lordship a moment suppose,
(" 'Tis a case that has happen'd, and may be again)
" That the visage or countenance had not a nose,
" Pray who would, or who could, wear Spectacles then ?

6

" On the whole it appears, and my argument shows,
" With a reasoning, the court will never condemn,
" That the Spectacles plainly were made for the Nose.
" And the Nose was as plainly intended for them.

7

Then shifting his side, as a lawyer knows how,
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes :
But what were his arguments few people know,
For the court did not think they were equally wise.

8

So his lordship decreed, with a grave, solemn tone
Decisive, and clear, without one if, or but.
" That whenever the Nose put his Spectacles on,
" By day-light, or candle-light—Eyes should be shut !"

Yours affectionately,

LETTER LXXI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Poetical reports of law cases are not very common, yet it seems to me desirable that they should be so. Many advantages would accrue from such a measure. They would, in the first place, be more commonly deposited in the memory, just as linen, grocery, or other such matters, when neatly packed, are known to occupy less room, and to lie more conveniently in any trunk, chest, or box, to which they may be committed. In the next place, being divested of that infinite circumlocution, and the endless embarrasment in which they are involved by it, they would become surprisingly intelligible, in comparison with their present obscurity. And lastly, they would by this means, be rendered susceptible of musical embellishment, and instead of being quoted in the country, with that dull monotony, which is so wearisome to by-standers, and frequently lulls even the judges themselves to

sleep, might be rehearsed in recitation; which would have an admirable effect, in keeping the attention fixed and lively, and could not fail to disperse that heavy atmosphere of sadness and gravity, which hangs over the jurisprudence of our country.

I remember many years ago, being informed by a relation of mine, who in his youth had applied himself to the study of the law, that one of his fellow-students, a gentleman of sprightly parts, and very respectable talents of the poetical kind, did actually engage in the prosecution of such a design; for reasons, I suppose, somewhat similar to, if not the same, with those I have now suggested. He began with Coke's Institutes; a book so rugged in its stile, that an attempt to polish it seemed an Herculean labour, and not less arduous and difficult, than it would be to give the smoothness of a rabbit's fur, to the prickly back of a hedge-hog. But he succeeded to admiration, as you will perceive by the following specimen, which is all that my said relation could recollect of the performance.

Tenant in fee
Simple, is he,
And need neither quake nor quiver,
Who hath his lands
Free from demands,
To him, and his heirs for ever.

You have an ear for music, and a taste for verse, which saves me the trouble of pointing out, with a critical nicety, the advantages of such a version. I proceed, therefore, to what I at first intended, and to transcribe the record of an adjudged case, thus managed, to which indeed, what I premised was intended merely as an introduction.*

W. C.

LETTER LXXII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Feb. 15, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad you were pleased with my report of so extraordinary a case. If the

* This letter concluded with the poetical law case of Nose, plaintiff—Eyes, defendants.

thought of versifying the decisions of our courts of justice had struck me, while I had the honor to attend them, it would perhaps have been no difficult matter to have compiled a volume of such amusing and interesting precedents; which if they wanted the eloquence of the Greek or Roman oratory, would have amply compensated that deficiency by the harmony of rhyme and metre.

Your account of my Uncle and your Mother, gave me great pleasure, I have long been afraid to inquire after some in whose welfare I always feel myself interested, lest the question should produce a painful answer. Longevity is the lot of so few, and is so seldom rendered comfortable by the associations of good health, and good spirits, that I could not very reasonably suppose either your relations or mine so happy in those respects, as it seems they are. May they continue to enjoy those blessings so long as the date of life shall last. I do not think that in these coster-monger days, as I have a notion Falstaff calls them, an antediluvian age is at all a desirable thing, but to live comfortably, while we do live, is a great matter, and comprehends in it every thing that can be wished for on this side the curtain that hangs between Time and Eternity!

Farewell my better friend, than any I have to boast of either among the Lords—or gentlemen of the House of Commons..

W. C.

LETTER LXXIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 2, 1781.

My dear friend, fine weather, and a variety of *extra-foraneous* occupations, (search Johnson's dictionary for the word, and if not found there, insert it—for it saves a deal of circumlocution, and is very lawfully compounded) make it difficult (excuse the length of a parenthesis, which I did not foresee the length of when I began it, and which may perhaps a little perplex the sense of what I am writing, though, as I seldom deal in that figure of speech, I have the less need to make an apology for doing it at present) make it difficult (I say) for me to find opportunities for writing. My morning is engrossed by the garden; and in the afternoon, 'till I have drunk tea, I am fit for nothing.

At five o'clock we walk; and when the walk is over, lassitude recommends rest, and again I become fit for nothing. The current hour, therefore, which (I need not tell you) is comprised in the interval between four and five, is devoted to your service, as the only one in the twenty-four which is not otherwise engaged.

I do not wonder that you have felt a great deal upon the occasion you mention in your last, especially on account of the asperity you have met with, in the behaviour of your friend. Reflect however, that as it is natural to you to have very fine feelings, it is equally natural to some other tempers, to leave those feelings entirely out of the question, and to speak to you, and to act towards you, just as they do towards the rest of mankind, without the least attention to the irritability of your system. Men of a rough, and unsparing address, should take great care that they be always in the right, the justness, and propriety of their sentiments and censures, being the only tolerable apology that can be made for such a conduct, especially in a country where civility of behaviour is inculcated even from the cradle. But in the instance now under our contemplation, I think you a sufferer under the weight of an animad-

version not founded in truth, and which, consequently, you did not deserve. I account him faithful in the pulpit, who dissembles nothing, that he believes, for fear of giving offence. To accommodate a discourse to the judgment and opinion of others, for the sake of pleasing them, though by doing so, we are obliged to depart widely from our own, is to be unfaithful to ourselves at least, and cannot be accounted fidelity to him, whom we profess to serve. But there are few men, who do not stand in need of the exercise of charity, and forbearance; and the gentleman in question, has afforded you an ample opportunity in this respect, to shew, how readily, though differing in your views, you can practise all, that he could possibly expect from you, if your persuasion corresponded exactly with his own.

With respect to *Monsieur le Curé*, I think you not quite excusable for suffering such a man to give you any uneasiness at all. The grossness and injustice of his demand, ought to be its own antidote. If a robber should miscall you a pitiful fellow, for not carrying a purse full of gold about you, would his brutality give you any concern? I suppose

not. Why then have you been distrest in the present instance?

Yours,

W. C.

The reviving poet, who had lived half a century with such a modest idea of his own extraordinary talents, that he had hitherto given no composition professedly to the public, now amused himself with preparations to appear as an author. But he hoped to conduct those preparations with a modest secrecy, and was astonished to find one of his intimate friends apprized of his design.

The following letters afford a very pleasing, circumstantial account, of the manner in which he was induced to venture into the world as a poet.

I will only add, to the information they contain, what I learned from the lips of his guardian friend, Mrs. Unwin; that she strongly solicited him, on his recovery from a very long fit of mental dejection, to devote his thoughts to poetry of considerable extent. She suggested to him, at the same time, the first subject of his verse, "*The Progress of*

Error," which the reader will recollect, as the second poem in his first volume. The time when that volume was completed, and the motives of its author for giving it to the world, are clearly displayed, in an admirable letter, to his poetical Cousin, Mrs. Cowper; and his feelings, on the approach of publication, are described with his usual nobleness of sentiment, and simplicity of expression, in reply to a question, upon the subject, from the anxious young friend, to whom he gave the first notice of his intention in the next letter.

LETTER LXXIV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 1, 1781.

Your Mother says I *must* write, and *must* admits of no apology; I might otherwise plead, that I have nothing to say, that I am weary, that I am dull, that it would be more convenient therefore for you, as well as for myself, that I should let it alone: but all these pleas, and whatever pleas besides, either disinclination, indolence, or necessity, might suggest, are over-ruled, as

they ought to be, the moment a lady adduces her irrefragable argument, *you must*. You have still however one comfort left, that what I must write, you may, or may not read, just as it shall please you; unless Lady Anne at your elbow, should say, you must read it, and then like a true knight, you will obey without looking for a remedy.

In the press, and speedily will be published, in one volume octavo, price three shillings, Poems, by William Cowper, of the Inner-temple, Esq. You may suppose, by the size of the publication, that the greatest part of them have been long kept secret, because you yourself have never seen them; but the truth is, that they are most of them, except what you have in your possession, the produce of the last winter. Two thirds of the compilation will be occupied by four pieces, the first of which sprung up in the month of December, and the last of them in the month of March. They contain, I suppose, in all, about two thousand and five hundred lines; are known, or to be known in due time, by the names of *Table Talk*——*The Progress of Error*——*Truth*——*Expostulation*. Mr. Newton writes a Preface, and Johnson is the publisher. The principal, I may say the only reason, why I never mentioned

to you, 'till now, an affair which I am just going to make known to all the world, (if *that* Mr. All-the-world should think it worth his knowing) has been this; that 'till within these few days, I had not the honor to know it myself. This may seem strange, but it is true, for not knowing where to find underwriters, who would chuse to insure them, and not finding it convenient to a purse like mine, to run any hazard, even upon the credit of my own ingenuity, I was very much in doubt for some weeks, whether any bookseller would be willing to subject himself to an ambiguity, that might prove very expensive in case of a bad market. But Johnson has heroically set all peradventures at defiance, and takes the whole charge upon himself. So out I come. I shall be glad of my Translations from Vincent Bourne, in your next frank. My Muse will lay herself at your feet immediately on her first public appearance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

May 9, 1781.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am in the press, and it is in vain to deny it. But how mysterious is the conveyance of intelligence from one end to the other of your great city!—Not many days since, except one man, and he but little taller than yourself, all London was ignorant of it; for I do not suppose that the public prints have yet announced the most agreeable tidings; the title-page, which is the basis of the advertisement, having so lately reached the publisher, and now it is known to you, who live at least two miles distant from my confidant upon the occasion.

My labours are principally the production of the last winter; all indeed, except a few of the minor pieces. When I can find no other occupation, I think, and when I think, I am very apt to do it in rhyme. Hence it comes to pass, that the season of the year, which generally pinches off the flowers of poetry, unfolds mine, such as they are, and crowns me with a winter garland. In this respect therefore, I and my contemporary bards are by no means

upon a par. They write when the delightful influences of fine weather, fine prospects, and a brisk motion of the animal spirits, make poetry almost the language of nature; and I, when icicles depend from all the leaves of the Parnassian laurel, and when a reasonable man would as little expect to succeed in verse, as to hear a blackbird whistle. This must be my apology to you for whatever want of fire and animation you may observe in what you will shortly have the perusal of. As to the Public, if they like me not, there is no remedy. A friend will weigh and consider all disadvantages, and make as large allowances as an author can wish, and larger perhaps than he has any right to expect; but not so the world at large; whatever they do not like, they will not by any apology be persuaded to forgive, and it would be in vain to tell *them* that I wrote my verses in January, for they would immediately reply, "Why did not you write them in May?" A question that might puzzle a wiser head than we poets are generally blessed with.

W. C.

LETTER LXXVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 10, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is Friday; I have just drunk tea, and just perused your letter; and though this answer to it cannot set off 'till Sunday, I obey the warm impulse I feel, which will not permit me to postpone the business till the regular time of writing.

I expected you would be grieved; if you had not been so, those sensibilities, which attend you upon every other occasion, must have left you upon this. I am sorry that I have given you pain, but not sorry that you have felt it. A concern of that sort would be absurd, because it would be to regret your friendship for me, and to be dissatisfied with the effect of it. Allow yourself however, three minutes only for reflection, and your penetration must necessarily dive into the motives of my conduct. In the first place and by way of preface, remember that I do not (whatever your partiality may incline you to do) account it of much consequence to any friend of mine, whether he is, or is not, employed by me

upon such an occasion. But all affected renunciations of poetical merit apart, (and all unaffected expressions of the sense I have of my own littleness in the poetical character too,) the obvious and only reason, why I resorted to Mr. Newton, and not to my friend Unwin, was this——that the former lived in London, the latter at Stock; the former was upon the spot to correct the press, to give instructions respecting any sudden alterations, and to settle with the publisher every thing that might possibly occur in the course of such a business:—the latter could not be applied to, for these purposes, without what would be a manifest encroachment on his kindness; because it might happen, that the troublesome office might cost him now and then a journey, which it was absolutely impossible for me to endure the thought of.

When I wrote to you for the copies you have sent me, I told you I was making a collection, but not with a design to publish. There is nothing truer, than at that time I had not the smallest expectation of sending a volume of Poems to the press. I had several small pieces, that might amuse, but I would not, when I publish, make the amusement of the reader my only object. When the winter deprived

me of other employments, I began to compose, and seeing six or seven months before me, which would naturally afford me much leisure for such a purpose, I undertook a piece of some length; that finished, another; and so on, till I had amassed the number of lines I mentioned in my last.

Believe of me what you please, but not that I am indifferent to you, or your friendship for me, on any occasion.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXVII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 23, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

If a writer's friends have need of patience, how much more the writer! Your desire to see my muse in public, and mine to gratify you, must both suffer the mortification of delay—I expected that my trumpeter would have informed the world by this time, of all that is needful for them to know, upon such an occasion; and that an

advertizing blast, blown through every news-paper, would have said——"The poet is coming."—— But man, especially man that writes verse, is born to disappointments, as surely as printers, and booksellers are born to be the most dilatory, and tedious of all creatures. The plain English of this magnificent preamble is, that the season of publication is just elapsed, that the town is going into the country, every day, and that my book cannot appear 'till they return, that is to say not 'tilll next winter. This misfortune however, comes not without its attendant advantage; I shall now have, what I should not otherwise have had, an opportunity to correct the press myself; no small advantage upon any occasion, but especially important, where poetry is concerned! A single erratum may knock out the brains of a whole passage, and that perhaps, which of all others, the unfortunate poet is the most proud of. Add to this, that now and then, there is to be found in a printing house, a presumptuous intermeddler, who will fancy himself a poet too, and what is still worse, a better than he that employs him. The consequence is, that with cobbling, and tinkering, and patching on here and there a shred of his own, he makes such a difference

between the original and the copy, that an author cannot know his own work again. Now as I chuse to be responsible for nobody's dullness but my own I am a little comforted, when I reflect, that it will be in my power to prevent all such impertinence, and yet not without your assistance. It will be quite necessary, that the correspondence between me and Johnson, should be carried on without the expence of postage, because proof sheets would make double or treble letters, which expence, as in every instance it must occur twice, first when the pacquet is sent, and again when it is returned, would be rather inconvenient to me, who as you perceive, am forced to live by my wits, and to him, who hopes to get a little matter, no doubt by the same means. Half a dozen franks, therefore to me, and *totidem* to him, will be singularly acceptable, if you can, without feeling it in any respect a trouble, procure them for me.

I am much obliged to you for your offer to support me in a translation of Bourne. It is but seldom however, and never except for my amusement that I translate; because I find it disagreeable to work by another man's pattern; I should at least, be sure to find it so, in a business of any length.

Again *that* is epigrammatic and witty in Latin, which would be perfectly insipid in English, and a translator of Bourne would frequently find himself obliged to supply what is called the turn, which is in fact the most difficult, and the most expensive part of the whole composition, and could not perhaps, in many instances, be done with any tolerable success. If a Latin poem is neat, elegant, and musical, it is enough——but English readers are not so easily satisfied. To quote myself, you will find, in comparing the jack-daw with the original, that I was obliged to sharpen a point, which, though smart enough in the Latin, would, in English, have appeared as plain, and as blunt as the tag of a lace. I love the memory of Vinny Bourne. I think him a better Latin poet than Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius, or any of the writers in *his* way, except Ovid and not at all inferior to *him*. I love him too, with a love of partiality, because he was usher of the fifth form at Westminster, when I passed through it. He was so good natured, and so indolent, that I lost more than I got by him; for he made me as idle as himself. He was such a sloven, as if he had trusted to his genius as a cloak for every thing that could disgust you in his person; and indeed in his writ-

ings, he has almost made amends for all. His humour is entirely original—he can speak of a magpie or a cat, in terms so exclusively appropriated to the character he draws, that one would suppose him animated by the spirit of the creature he describes. And with all his drollery, there is a mixture of rational, and even religious reflection, at times, and always an air of pleasantry, good-nature, and humanity, that makes him, in my mind, one of the most amiable Writers in the world. It is not common to meet with an author, who can make you smile, and yet at nobody's expence; who is always entertaining and yet always harmless, and who though always elegant, and classical to a degree not always found in the classics themselves, charms more by the simplicity and playfulness of his ideas, than by the neatness and purity of his verse; yet such was poor Vinny. I remember seeing the Duke of Richmond set fire to his greasy locks, and box his ears to put it out again. Since I began to write long poems I seem to turn up my nose at the idea of a short one. I have lately entered upon one, which if ever finished, cannot easily be comprised in much less than a thousand lines! But this must make part of a second publication, and be accompanied, in due time,

by others not yet thought of; for it seems (what I did not know 'till the bookseller had occasion to tell me so) that single pieces stand no chance, and that nothing less than a volume will go down. You yourself afford me a proof of the certainty of this intelligence, by sending me franks, which nothing less than a volume can fill. I have accordingly sent you one, but am obliged to add, that had the wind been in any other point of the compass, or blowing as it does from the east, had it been less boisterous, you must have been contented with a much shorter letter, but the abridgement of every other occupation is very favorable to that of writing.

I am glad I did not expect to hear from you by this post, for the boy has lost the bag in which your letter must have been enclosed—another reason for my prolixity!

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

LETTER LXXVIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I believe, I never give you trouble without feeling more than I give; so much by way of preface and apology!

Thus stands the case——Johnson has begun to print, and Mr. Newton has already corrected the first sheet. This unexpected dispatch makes it necessary for me to furnish myself with the means of communication, viz. the franks, as soon as may be. There are reasons, (I believe I mentioned them in my last) why I chuse to revise the proof myself.—nevertheless, if your delicacy must suffer the puncture of a pin's point, in procuring the franks for me, I release you entirely from the task, you are as free as if I had never mentioned them. But you will oblige me by a speedy answer upon this subject, because it is expedient that the printer should know to whom he is to send his copy; and, when the press is once set, those humble servants of the poets, are rather impatient of any delay, because the types are wanted for other authors, who are equally impatient to be born.

This fine weather I suppose, sets you on horseback, and allures the ladies into the garden. If I was at Stock, I should be of their party; and while they sat knotting or netting in the shade, should comfort myself with the thought, that I had not a beast under me, whose walk would seem tedious, whose trot would jumble me, and whose gallop might throw me into a ditch. What nature expressly designed me for, I have never been able to conjecture; I seem to myself so universally disqualified for the common, and customary occupations and amusements of mankind. When I was a boy, I excelled at cricket and foot ball, but the fame I acquired by achievements, that way, is long since forgotten, and I do not know that I have made a figure in any thing since. I am sure however, that she did not design me for a horseman, and that if all men, were of my mind, there would be an end of all jockeyship for ever. I am rather straitened for time, and not very rich in materials, therefore, with our joint love to you all, conclude myself.

Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER LXXIX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 5, 1781.

My dear friend, if the old adage be true that "he gives twice, who gives speedily," it is equally true, that he who not only uses expedition in giving, but gives more than was asked, gives thrice at least. Such is the style in which Mr.——confers a favor. He has not only sent me franks to Johnson, but, under another cover, has added six to you. These last, for aught that appears by your letter, he threw in of his own mere bounty. I beg that my share of thanks may not be wanting on this occasion, and that, when you write to him next, you will assure him of the sense I have of the obligation, which is the more flattering, as it includes a proof of his predilection in favor of the poems, his franks are destined to enclose. May they not forfeit his good opinion hereafter, nor yours, to whom I hold myself indebted in the first place, and who have equally given me credit for their deservings! Your Mother says, that, although there are passages in them containing opinions, which will not be univer-

sally subscribed to, the world will at least allow, what my great modesty will not permit me to subjoin. I have the highest opinion of her judgment, and know by having experienced the soundness of them, that her observations are always worthy of attention, and regard. Yet, strange as it may seem, I do not feel the vanity of an author, when she commends me—but I feel something better, a spur to my diligence, and a cordial to my spirits, both together animating me to deserve, at least not to fall short of her expectations. For I verily believe, if my dullness should earn me the character of a dunce, the censure would affect her more than me, not, that I am insensible of the value of a good name, either as a man or an author. Without an ambition to attain it, it is absolutely unattainable under either of those descriptions. But my life, having been in many respects a series of mortifications and disappointments, I am become less apprehensive, and impressible perhaps in some points than I should otherwise have been; and though I should be exquisitely sorry to disgrace my friends, could endure my own share of the affliction with a reasonable measure of tranquility.

These seasonable showers have poured floods upon all the neighbouring parishes, but have passed

us by. My garden languishes, and, what is worse the fields too languish, and the upland-grass is burnt. These discriminations are not fortuitous. But if they are providential, what do they import? I can only answer, as a friend of mine once answered a mathematical question in the schools—"*Prorsùs nescio*" Perhaps it is, that men, who will not believe what they cannot understand, may learn the folly of their conduct, while their very senses are made to witness against them; and themselves in the course of Providence. become the subjects of a thousand dispensations, they cannot explain. But the end is never answered. The lesson is inculcated indeed frequently enough, but nobody learns it. Well. Instruction, vouchsafed in vain, is (I suppose) a debt to be accounted for hereafter. You must understand this to be a soliloquy. I wrote my thoughts without recollecting that I was writing a letter, and to you.

W. C.

LETTER LXXX.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

June 24, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The letter you withheld so long, lest it should give me pain, gave me pleasure. Horace says, the poets are a waspish race; and from my own experience of the temper of two or three, with whom I was formerly connected, I can readily subscribe to the character he gives them. But for my own part, I have never yet felt that excessive irritability, which some writers discover, when a friend, in the words of Pope,

"Just hints a fault, or hesitates dislike."

Least of all would I give way to such an unseasonable ebullition, merely because a civil question is proposed to me, with such gentleness, and by a man whose concern for my credit and character, I verily believe to be sincere. I reply therefore, not peevishly, but with a sense of the kindness of your intentions, that I hope you may make yourself very easy on a subject, that I can perceive has occasioned

you some solicitude. When I wrote the poem called *Truth*, it was indispensibly necessary that I should set forth that doctrine, which I know to be true; and that I should pass what I understood to be a just censure upon opinions, and persuasions, that differ from, or stand in direct opposition to it; because though some errors may be innocent, and even religious errors are not always pernicious, yet in a case where the faith and hope of a Christian are concerned, they must necessarily be destructive; and because neglecting this, I should have betrayed my subject; either suppressing, what in my judgment is of the last importance, or giving countenance, by a timid silence, to the very evils it was my design to combat. That you may understand me better, I will subjoin——that I wrote that poem on purpose to inculcate the eleemosynary character of the Gospel, as a dispensation of mercy, in the most absolute sense of the word, to the exclusion of all claims of merit on the part of the receiver; consequently to set the brand of invalidity upon the plea of works, and to discover, upon spiritual ground, the absurdity of that notion, which includes a solecism in the very terms of it, that man, by repentance, and good works, may deserve the mercy of his Maker:

I call it a solecism, because mercy deserved ceases to be mercy, and must take the name of justice. This is the opinion which I said in my last, the world would not acquiesce in, but except this, I do not recollect that I have introduced a syllable into any of my pieces, that they can possibly object to; and even this I have endeavoured to deliver from doctrinal dryness, by as many pretty things, in the way of trinket and plaything, as I could muster upon the subject. So that if I have rubbed their gums, I have taken care to do it with a coral, and even that coral embellished by the ribbon to which it is tied, and recommended by the tinkling of all the bells I could contrive to annex to it.

You need not trouble yourself to call on Johnson; being perfectly acquainted with the progress of the business, I am able to satisfy your curiosity myself——the post before the last, I returned to him the second sheet of *Table-Talk*, which he had sent me for correction, and which stands foremost in the volume. The delay has enabled me to add a piece of considerable length, which, but for the delay, would not have made its appearance upon this occasion; it answers to the name of Hope.

I remember a line in the Odyssey, which li-

terally translated, imports, that that there is nothing in the world more impudent than the belly. But had Homer met with an instance of modesty like yours, he would either have suppressed that observation, or at least have qualified it with an exception. I hope that, for the future, Mrs. Unwin will never suffer you to go to London, without putting some victuals in your pocket; for what a strange article would it make in a news-paper, that a tall, well-dressed gentleman, by his appearance a clergyman, and with a purse of gold in his pocket, was found starved to death in the street. How would it puzzle conjecture, to account for such a phenomenon! Some would suppose that you had been kidnapt, like Betty Canning, of hungry memory; others would say, the gentleman was a Methodist, and had practised a rigorous self-denial, which had unhappily proved too hard for his constitution; but I will venture to say, that nobody would divine the real cause, or suspect for a moment, that your modesty had occasioned the tragedy in question. By the way, is it not possible, that the spareness, and slenderness of your person may be owing to the same cause? for surely it is reasonable to suspect, that the bashfullness, which could prevail against you, on so

trying an occasion, may be equally prevalent on others. I remember having been told by Colman, that when he once dined with Garrick, he repeatedly pressed him to eat more of a certain dish, that he was known to be particularly fond of; Colman as often refused, and at last declared he could not; "But could not you," says Garrick, "if you was in a dark closet by yourself?" The same question might perhaps be put to you, with as much, or more propriety, and therefore I recommend it to you, either to furnish yourself with a little more assurance, or always to eat in the dark.

We sympathize with Mrs. Unwin, and if it will be any comfort to her to know it, can assure her, that a lady in our neighbourhood is always, on such occasions, the most miserable of all things, and yet escapes with great facility, through all the dangers of her state.

Yours, *ut semper*,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 6, 1781.

We are obliged to you for the rugs, a commodity that can never come to such a place as this, at an unseasonable time. We have given one to an industrious poor widow, with four children, whose sister overheard her shivering in the night, and with some difficulty, brought her to confess, the next morning, that she was half perished for want of sufficient covering. Her said sister borrowed a rug for her at a neighbour's immediately, which she had used only one night when yours arrived: and I doubt not, but we shall meet with others, equally indigent, and deserving of your bounty.

Much good may your humanity do you, as it does so much good to others!—You can no where find objects more entitled to your pity, than where your pity seeks them. A man, whose vices and irregularities have brought his liberty and life into danger, will always be viewed with an eye of compassion by those, who understand what human nature is made of; and while we acknowledge the se-

verities of the law to be founded upon principles of necessity and justice, and are glad that there is such a barrier provided for the peace of society, if we consider that the difference between ourselves and the culprit, is not of our own making, we shall be, as you are, tenderly affected by the view of his misery; and not the less so, because he has brought it upon himself.

I give you joy of your own hair, no doubt you are considerably a gainer in your appearance, by being *disperiwigged*. The best wig is that, which most resembles the natural hair. Why then should he, who has hair enough of his own, have recourse to imitation? I have little doubt, but that if an arm or leg, could have been taken off, with as little pain as attends the amputation of a curl or a lock of hair, the natural limb would have been thought less becoming, or less convenient, by some men, than a wooden one, and have been disposed of accordingly.

Having begun my letter with a miserable pen, I was unwilling to change it for a better, lest my writing should not be all of a piece. But it has worn me and my patience quite out. Yours ever,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

July 12, 1781.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I am going to send, what when you have read, you may scratch your head, and say, I suppose, there's nobody knows, whether what I have got, be verse or not,—by the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme, but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before?

I have writ Charity, not for popularity, but as well as I cou'd, in hopes to do good; and if the Reviewer, should say "to be sure, the gentleman's "muse, wears Methodist shoes, you may know by "her pace, and talk about grace, that she and her "bard, have little regard, for the taste and fashions, "and ruling passions, and hoidening play, of the "modern day; and though she assume, a borrowed "plume, and now and then wear, a tittering air, 'tis "only her plan, to catch if she can, the giddy and "gay, as they go that way, by a production, on "new construction, she has baited her trap, in "hopes to snap, all, all that may come with a su-"gar-plum."——His opinion in this will not be

amiss; 'tis what I intend, my principal end, and if I succeed, and folks should read, 'till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid, for all I have said, and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme, as far as from hence, to the end of my sense, and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live and am here, another year.

I have heard before, of a room with a floor, laid upon springs, and such like things, with so much art, in every part, that when you went in, you was forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in, and now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, wfthout pipe or string, or any such thing; and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert, and gay, 'till you come to an end of what I have penn'd, which that you may do, ere Madam and you, are quite worn out with jigging about, I take my leave, and here you receive, a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me——

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 6, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

What a world are you daily conversant with, which I have not seen these twenty years, and shall never see again! The arts of dissipation (I suppose) are no where practised with more refinement, or success, than at the place of your present residence. By your account of it, it seems to be just what it was when I visited it, a scene of idleness and luxury, music, dancing, cards, walking, riding, bathing, eating, drinking, coffee, tea, scandal, dressing, yawning, sleeping, the rooms perhaps more magnificent, because the proprietors are grown richer, but the manners and occupations of the company just the same. Though my life has long been like that of a recluse, I have not the temper of one, nor am I in the least an enemy to cheerfulness, and good-humour; but I cannot envy you your situation; I even feel myself constrained to prefer the silence of this nook, and the snug fire-side in our own diminutive parlour, to all the splendour and gaiety of Brighton.

You ask me, how I feel on the occasion of my approaching publication? Perfectly at my ease. If I had not been pretty well assured before hand, that my tranquillity would be but little endangered by such a measure, I would never have engaged in it; for I cannot bear disturbance. I have had in view two principal objects; first, to amuse myself—and secondly, to compass that point in such a manner, that others, might possibly be the better for my amusement. If I have succeeded, it will give me pleasure, but if I have failed, I shall not be mortified to the degree that might perhaps be expected. I remember an old adage (though not where it is to be found) "*bene vixit, qui bene latuit,*" and if I had recollected it at the right time, it should have been the motto to my book. By the way, it will make an excellent one for Retirement, if you can but tell me whom to quote for it. The critics cannot deprive me of the pleasure I have in reflecting, that so far as my leisure has been employed in writing for the public, it has been conscientiously employed, with a view to their advantage, There is nothing agreeable, to be sure, in being chronicled for a dunce; but I believe, there lives not a man upon earth, who would be less affected by it than myself.

With all this indifference to fame, which you know me too well to suppose me capable of affecting, I have taken the utmost pains to deserve it. This may appear a mystery, or a paradox in practice, but it is true. I considered that the taste of the day is refined, and delicate to excess, and that to disgust that delicacy of taste, by a slovenly inattention to it, would be to forfeit, at once, all hope of being useful; and for this reason, though I have written more verse this last year, than perhaps any man in England, I have finished and polished, and touched, and retouched, with the utmost care. If after all, I should be converted into waste paper, it may be my misfortune, but it will not be my fault. I shall bear it with the most perfect serenity.

I do not mean to give —— a copy; he is a good-natured little man, and crows exactly like a cock, but knows no more of verse than the cock he imitates.

Whoever supposes that Lady Austen's fortune is precarious, is mistaken. I can assure you, upon the ground of the most circumstantial, and authentic information, that it is both genteel, and perfectly safe.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIV.

To Mrs. COWPER.

Oct. 19, 1781.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Your fear lest I should think you unworthy of my correspondence, on account of your delay to answer, may change sides now, and more properly belongs to me. It is long since I received your last, and yet I believe I can say truly that not a post has gone by me since the receipt of it, that has not reminded me of the debt I owe you, for your obliging and unreserved communications both in prose and verse, especially for the latter, because I consider them as marks of your peculiar confidence. The truth is, I have been such a verse-maker myself, and so busy in preparing a volume for the press, which I imagine will make its appearance in the course of the winter, that I hardly had leisure to listen to the calls of any other engagement. It is however finished, and gone to the printer's, and I have nothing now to do with it, but to correct the sheets as they are sent to me, and consign it over to the judgment of the public. It is a bold undertaking at this time of day, when so

many writers of the greatest abilities have gone before, who seem to have anticipated every valuable subject, as well as all the graces of poetical embellishment, to step forth into the world in the character of a bard, especially when it is considered that luxury, idleness, and vice, have debauched the public taste, and that nothing hardly is welcome, but childish fiction, or what has at least a tendency to excite a laugh. I thought however that I had stumbled upon some subjects that had never before been poetically treated, and upon some others, to which I imagined it would not be difficult to give an air of novelty, by the manner of treating them. My sole drift is to be useful; a point which however I knew I should in vain aim at, unless I could be likewise entertaining. I have therefore fixed these two strings upon my bow, and by the help of both have done my best to send my arrow to the mark. My readers will hardly have begun to laugh, before they will be called upon to correct that levity, and peruse me with a more serious air. As to the effect, I leave it alone in His hands who can alone produce it; neither prose nor verse can reform the manners of a dissolute age, much less can they inspire a sense of religious obligation, unless assisted,

and made efficacious by the power who superintends the truth he has vouchsafed to impart.

You made my heart ache with a sympathetic sorrow, when you described the state of your mind on occasion of your late visit into Hartfordshire. Had I been previously informed of your journey before you made it, I should have been able to have foretold all your feelings with the most unerring certainty of prediction. You will never cease to feel upon that subject, but with your principles of resignation, and acquiescence in the divine will, you will always feel as becomes a Christian. We are forbidden to murmur, but we are not forbidden to regret; and whom we loved tenderly while living, we may still pursue with an affectionate remembrance, without having any occasion to charge ourselves with rebellion against the sovereignty that appointed a separation. A day is coming, when I am confident, you will see and know, that mercy to both parties was the principal agent in a scene, the recollection of which is still painful.

W. C.

Those who read what the poet has here said of his intended publication, may perhaps think it strange that it was introduced to the world with a Preface, not written by himself, but by his friend Mr. Newton. The circumstance is singular; but it arose from two amiable peculiarities in the character of Cowper—his extreme diffidence in regard to himself, and his kind eagerness to gratify the affectionate ambition of a friend, whom he tenderly esteemed. Mr. Newton has avowed the fervency of this ambition in a very ingenuous and manly manner; and they must have little candour indeed, who are disposed to cavil at his alacrity in presenting himself to the public as the bosom friend of that incomparable author, whom he had attended so faithfully in sickness and sorrow.—I hope it is no sin to covet honor as the friend of Cowper, for if it is, I fear I may say but too truly in the words of Shakespear,

"I am the most offending soul alive."

Happy, however, if I may be able so to conduct, and finish, this biographical compilation, that those, who knew and loved him best, may be the most

willing to applaud me as his friend; a title, that my heart prefers to almost every other distinction!

In the course of the following letters, the reader will find occasion to admire the grateful delicacy of the poet, not only toward the writer of his Preface, but even in the liberal praise with which he speaks of his publisher.

LETTER LXXXV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 5, 1781.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I give you joy of your safe return from the lips of the great deep. You did not discern many signs of sobriety, or true wisdom, among the people of Brighthelmstone, but it is not possible to observe the manners of a multitude, of whatever rank, without learning something; I mean, if a man has a mind like yours, capable of reflection. If he sees nothing to imitate, he is sure to see something to avoid; if nothing to congratulate his fellow-creatures upon, at least much to excite his compassion. There is not, I think, so melancholy a sight in the

world (an hospital is not to be compared with it) as that of a thousand persons distinguished by the name of gentry, who gentle perhaps by nature, and made more gentle by education, have the appearance of being innocent and inoffensive, yet being destitute of all religion, or not at all governed by the religion they profess, are none of them at any great distance from an eternal state, where self-deception will be impossible, and where amusements cannot enter. Some of them we may say, will be reclaimed—it is most probable indeed that some of them will, because mercy, if one may be allowed the expression, is fond of distinguishing itself by seeking its objects among the most desperate class; but the Scripture gives no encouragement to the warmest charity to hope for deliverance for them all. When I see an afflicted, and unhappy man, I say, to myself, there is perhaps a man, whom the world would envy if they knew the value of his sorrows, which are possibly intended only to soften his heart, and to turn his afflictions toward their proper centre. But when I see, or hear of a crowd of voluptuaries, who have no ears but for music, no eyes but for splendour, and no tongue but for impertinence and folly—I say, or at least I see occasion to say—This is madness—This persisted in

must have a tragical conclusion—It will condemn you, not only as Christians, unworthy of the name, but as intelligent creatures—You know by the light of nature, if you have not quenched it, that there is a God, and that a life like yours, cannot be according to his will.

I ask no pardon of you for the gravity and gloominess, of these reflections, which I stumbled on when I least expected it; though to say the truth, these, or others of a like complexion are sure to occur to me, when I think of a scene of public diversion like that you have lately left.

I am inclined to hope that Johnson told you the truth, when he said he should publish me soon after Christmas. His press has been rather more punctual in its remittances, than it used to be; we have now but little more than two of the longest pieces, and the small ones that are to follow, by way of epilogue, to print off, and then the affair is finished. But once more I am obliged to gape for franks; only these, which I hope will be the last I shall want, at yours, and Mr. ——'s convenient leisure.

We rejoice that you have so much reason to be satisfied with John's proficiency. The more spirit

he has, the better, if his spirit is but manageable, and put under such management, as your prudence, and Mrs. Unwin's will suggest. I need not guard you against severity, of which I conclude there is no need, and which I am sure you are not at all inclined to practice without it; but, perhaps, if I was to whisper—beware of too much indulgence—I should only give a hint, that the fondness of a father for a fine boy, might seem to justify. I have no particular reason for the caution, at this distance it is not possible I should, but in a case like your's an admonition of that sort seldom wants propriety.

Yours my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 26, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wrote to you by the last post, supposing you at Stock; but lest that letter should not follow you to Laytonstone, and you should

suspect me of unreasonable delay, and lest the frank you have sent me, should degenerate into waste paper, and perish upon my hands, I write again. The former letter however, containing all my present stock of intelligence, it is more than possible, that this may prove a blank, or but little worthy your acceptance. You will do me the justice to suppose, that if I could be very entertaining, I would be so, because, by giving me credit for such a willingness to please, you only allow me a share of that universal vanity, which inclines every man, upon all occasions, to exhibit himself to the best advantage. To say the truth however, when I write, as I do to you, not about business, nor on any subject that approaches to that description, I mean much less my correspondent's amusement, which my modesty will not always permit me to hope for, than my own. There is a pleasure, annexed to the communication of one's ideas, whether by word of mouth, or by letter, which nothing earthly can supply the place of, and it is the delight we find in this mutual intercourse, that not only proves us to be creatures intended for social life, but more than any thing else, perhaps, fits us for it,——I have no patience with philosophers——they, one and all, suppose (at least I understand

it to be a prevailing opinion among them) that man's weakness, his necessities, his inability to stand alone, have furnished the prevailing motive, under the influence of which, he renounced at first a life of solitude, and became a gregarious creature. It seems to me more reasonable, as well as more honorable to my species, to suppose, that generosity of soul, and a brotherly attachment to our own kind, drew us, as it were, to one common centre, taught us to build cities, and inhabit them, and welcome every stranger, that would cast in his lot amongst us that we might enjoy fellowship with each other, and the luxury of reciprocal endearments, without which a paradise could afford no comfort. There are indeed, all sorts of characters in the world; there are some whose understandings are so sluggish, and whose hearts are such mere clods, that they live in society without either contributing to the sweets of it, or having any relish for them——a man of this stamp, passes by our window continually—I never saw him conversing with a neighbour but once in my life, though I have known him by sight these twelve years—he is of a very sturdy make, and has a round belly, extremely protuberant, which he evidently considers as his best friend, because it is his only com-

panion, and it is the labour of his life to fill it. I can easily conceive, that it is merely the love of good eating and drinking, and now and then the want of a new pair of shoes, that attaches this man so much to the neighbourhood of his fellow mortals; for suppose these exigencies, and others of a like kind, to subsist no longer, and what is there that could give society the preference in his esteem? He might strut about with his two thumbs upon his hips in the wilderness, he could hardly be more silent, than he is at Olney, and for any advantage or comfort, of friendship, or brotherly affection, he could not be more destitute of such blessings there, than in his present situation. But other men have something more than guts to satisfy; there are the yearnings of the heart, which, let philosophers say what they will, are more importunate, than all the necessities of the body, that will not suffer a creature, worthy to be called human, to be content with an insulated life, or to look for his friends among the beasts of the forest. Yourself for instance! It is not because there are no taylors, or pastry cooks, to be found upon Salisbury plain, that you do not chuse it for your abode, but because you are a philanthropist—because you are susceptible of social impressions, and have a pleasure in

doing a kindness when you can. Now, upon the word of a poor creature, I have said all that I have said, without the least intention to say one word of it when I began. But thus it is with my thoughts—when you shake a crab-tree, the fruit falls; good for nothing indeed when you have got it, but still the best that is to be expected from a crab-tree. You are welcome to them, such as they are, and if you approve my sentiments, tell the philosophers of the day, that I have out-shot them all, and have discovered the true origin of society, when I least looked for it.

LETTER LXXXVII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 5, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Did I allow myself to plead the common excuse of idle correspondents, and esteem it a sufficient reason for not writing, that I have nothing to write about, I certainly should not write now. But I have so often found, on similar

occasions, when a great penury of matter has seemed to threaten me with an utter impossibility of hatching a letter, that nothing is necessary, but to put pen to paper, and go on in order to conquer all difficulties; that availing myself of past experience, I now begin with a most assured persuasion, that sooner or later one idea naturally suggesting another, I shall come to a most prosperous conclusion.

In the last Review, I mean in the last but one, I saw Johnson's critique upon Prior and Pope. I am bound to acquiesce in his opinion of the latter, because it has always been my own. I could never agree with those who preferred him to Dryden, nor with others (I have known such, and persons of taste and discernment too) who could not allow him to be a poet at all. He was certainly a mechanical maker of verses, and in every line he ever wrote, we see indubitable marks of most indefatigable industry and labour. Writers, who find it necessary to make such strenuous and painful exertions, are generally as phlegmatic, as they are correct; but Pope was, in this respect, exempted from the common lot of authors of that class. With the unwearied application of a plodding Flemish painter, who draws a shrimp with the most minute exactness, he

had all the genius of one of the first masters. Never, I believe, were such talents, and such drudgery united. But I admire Dryden most, who has succeeded by mere dint of genius, and in spite of a laziness, and carelessness, almost peculiar to himself. His faults are numberless, and so are his beauties. His faults are those of a great man, and his beauties are such, (at least sometimes,) as Pope, with all his touching, and re-touching, could never equal. So far therefore, I have no quarrel with Johnson. But I cannot subscribe to what he says of Prior. In the first place, though my memory may fail me, I do not recollect that he takes any notice of his Solomon, in my mind, the best poem, whether we consider the subject of it, or the execution, that he ever wrote. In the next place, he condemns him for introducing Venus and Cupid into his love verses, and concludes it impossible his passion could be sincere, because when he would express it, he has recourse to fables. But when Prior wrote, those deities were not so obsolete, as they are at present. His contemporary writers, and some that succeeded him, did not think them beneath their notice. Tibullus, in reality, disbelieved their existence, as much as we do; yet Tibullus is allowed to be the

prince of all poetical inamoratos, though he mentions them in almost every page. There is a fashion in these things, which the Doctor seems to have forgotten. But what shall we say of his fusty-rusty remarks upon Henry and Emma? I agree with him, that morally considered, both the knight and his lady are bad characters, and that each exhibits an example which ought not to be followed. The man dissembles in a way, that would have justified the woman had she renounced him, and the woman resolves to follow him at the expence of delicacy, propriety, and even modesty itself. But when the critic calls it a dull dialogue, who but a critic will believe him? There are few readers of poetry of either sex, in this country, who cannot remember how that enchanting piece has bewitched them, who do not know, that instead of finding it tedious, they have been so delighted with the romantic turn of it, as to have overlooked all its defects, and to have given it a consecrated place in their memories, without ever feeling it a burthen. I wonder almost, that as the Bacchanals served Orpheus, the boys and girls do not tear this husky, dry, commentator, limb from limb, in resentment of such an injury done to their darling poet. I admire Johnson, as a man of great erudition,

and sense, but when he sets himself up for a judge of writers upon the subject of love, a passion which I suppose he never felt in his life, he might as well think himself qualified to pronounce upon a treatise on horsemanship, or the art of fortification.

The next pacquet I receive, will bring me, I imagine, the last proof sheet of my volume, which will consist of about three hundred and fifty pages, honestly printed. My public *entrée* therefore is not far distant.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 17, 1782.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I am glad we agree in our opinion of king critic, and the writers on whom he has bestowed his animadversions. It is a matter of indifference to me whether I think with the world at large or not, but I wish my friends to be of my

mind. The same work will wear a different appearance, in the eyes of the same man, according to the different views with which he reads it; if merely for his amusement, his candour being in less danger of a twist from interest or prejudice, he is pleased with what is really pleasing, and is not over curious to discover a blemish, because the exercise of a minute exactness is not consistent with his purpose. But if he once becomes a critic by trade, the case is altered. He must then at any rate, establish if he can, an opinion in every mind, of his uncommon discernment, and his exquisite taste. This great end, he can never accomplish by thinking in the track that has been beaten, under the hoof of public judgment. He must endeavour to convince the world, that their favorite authors have more faults than they are aware of, and such as they have never suspected. Having marked out a writer universally esteemed, whom he finds it for that very reason, convenient to depreciate and traduce, he will overlook some of his beauties, he will faintly praise others, and in such a manner as to make thousands, more modest, though quite as judicious as himself, question whether they are beauties at all. Can there be a stronger illustration of all that I have said, than the severity of Johnson's remarks upon Prior, I

might have said the injustice? His reputation as an author, who, with much labour indeed, but with admirable success, has embellished all his poems with the most charming ease, stood unshaken 'till Johnson thrust his head against it. And how does he attack him in this his principal fort? I cannot recollect his very words, but I am much mistaken indeed, if my memory fails me with respect to the purport of them. "His words," he says, "appear to be forced "into their proper places: There indeed we find "them, but find likewise, that their arrangement has "been the effect of constraint, and that without vio- "lence, they would certainly have stood in a differ- "ent order." By your leave most learned Doctor, this is the most disingenuous remark I ever met with, and would have come with a better grace from Curl, or Dennis. Every man conversant with verse-writing, knows, and knows by painful experience, that the familiar stile, is of all stiles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose, without being prosaic, to marshal the words of it in such an order, as they might naturally take in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without meanness; harmoniously, elegantly, and without seeming to displace a syllable for the sake of

the rhyme, is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake. He that could accomplish this task was Prior; many have imitated his excellence in this particular, but the best copies have fallen far short of the original. And now to tell us, after we and our fathers have admired him for it so long, that he is an easy writer indeed, but that his ease has an air of stiffness in it, in short, that his ease is not ease, but only something like it, what is it but a self contradiction, an observation that grants what it is just going to deny, and denies what it has just granted, in the same sentence and in the same breath?—But I have filled the greatest part of my sheet with a very uninteresting subject. I will only say, that as a nation, we are not much indebted, in point of poetical credit, to this too sagacious and unmerciful judge; and that for myself in particular, I have reason to rejoice that he entered upon, and exhausted the labours of his office, before my poor volume could possibly become an object of them. By the way, you cannot have a book at the time you mention, I have lived a fortnight or more in expectation of the last sheet, which is not yet arrived.

You have already furnished John's memory with by far the greatest part of what a parent would

wish to store it with. If all that is merely trivial, and all that has an immoral tendency were expunged from our English poets, how would they shrink, and how would some of them completely vanish. I believe there are some of Dryden's Fables, which he would find very entertaining; they are for the most part fine compositions, and not above his apprehension; but Dryden has written few things that are not blotted here and there with an unchaste allusion, so that you must pick his way for him, lest he should tread in the dirt. You did not mention Milton's Allegro and Penseroso, which I remember being so charmed with when I was a boy, that I was never weary of them. There are even passages in the paradisiacal part of the Paradise Lost, which he might study with advantage. And to teach him, as you can, to deliver some of the fine orations made in the Pandæmonium, and those between Satan, Ithuriel, and Zephon, with emphasis, dignity, and propriety, might be of great use to him hereafter. The sooner the ear is formed, and the organs of speech are accustomed to the various inflections of the voice, which the rehearsal of those passages demands, the better. I should think too, that Thomson's Seasons might afford him some useful lessons. At least they would have a

tendency to give his mind an observing, and a philosophical turn. I do not forget that he is but a child. But I remember that he is a child favored with talents, superior to his years. We were much pleased with his remarks on your alms-giving, and doubt not but it will be verified with respect to the two guineas you sent us, which have made four Christian people happy. Ships I have none, nor have touched a pencil these three years, if ever I take it up again, which I rather suspect I shall not, (the employment requiring stronger eyes than mine) it shall be at John's service.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

LETTER LXXXIX.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 2, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Though I value your correspondence highly on its own account, I certainly value it the more in consideration of the many difficulties under which you carry it on. Having so

many other engagements, and engagements so much more worthy your attention, I ought to esteem it, as I do, a singular proof of your friendship, that you so often make an opportunity to bestow a letter upon me: And this, not only because mine, which I write in a state of mind not very favorable to religious contemplations, are never worth your reading, but especially because while you consult my gratification and endeavour to amuse my melancholy, your thoughts are forced out of the only channel in which they delight to flow, and constrained into another so different and so little interesting to a mind like yours, that but for me, and for my sake, they would perhaps never visit it. Though I should be glad therefore to hear from you every week, I do not complain that I enjoy that privilege but once in a fortnight, but am rather happy to be indulged in it so often.

I thank you for the jog you gave Johnson's elbow; communicated from him to the printer, it has produced me two more sheets, and two more will bring the business, I suppose, to a conclusion. I sometimes feel such a perfect indifference, with respect to the public opinion of my book, that I am ready to flatter myself no censure of reviewers, or other critical readers, would occasion me the smallest

disturbance. But not feeling myself constantly possessed of this desirable apathy, I am sometimes apt to suspect that it is not altogether sincere, or at least that I may lose it just in the moment, when I may happen most to want it. Be it however, as it may, I am still persuaded, that it is not in their power to mortify me much. I have intended well, and performed to the best of my ability——so far was right, and this is a boast of which they cannot rob me. If they condemn my poetry, I must even say with Cervantes, "Let them do better if they can!"—if my doctrine, they judge that, which they do not understand; I shall except to the jurisdiction of the court, and plead, *Coram non judice*. Even Horace could say, he should neither be the plumper for the praise, nor the leaner for the condemnation of his reader, and it will prove me wanting to myself indeed, if supported by so many sublimer considerations than he was master of, I cannot sit loose to popularity, which like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, and is equally out of our command. If you, and two or three more, such as you, say, well done; it ought to give me more contentment, than if I could earn Churchill's laurels, and by the same means.

I wrote to Lord Dartmouth to apprise him of my intended present, and have received a most affestionate and obliging answer.

I am rather pleased that you have adopted other sentiments respecting our intended present to the critical Doctor. I allow him to be a man of gigantic talents, and most profound learning, nor have I any doubts about the universality of his knowledge. But by what I have seen of his animadversions on the poets, I feel myself much disposed to question, in many instances, either his candour or his taste. He finds fault too often, like a man that having sought it very industriously, is at last obliged to stick it on a pin's point, and look at it through a microscope, and I am sure I could easily convict him of having denied many beauties, and overlooked more. Whether his judgment be in itself defective, or whether it be warped by collateral considerations, a writer upon such subjects as I have chosen, would probably find but little mercy at his hands.

No winter since we knew Olney, has kept us more confined than the present. We have not more than three times escaped into the fields, since last autumn. Man, a changeable creature in himself, seems to subsist best in a state of variety, as his pro-

per element——a melancholy man at least, is apt to grow sadly weary of the same walks, and the same pales, and to find that the same scene will suggest the same thoughts perpetually.

Though I have spoken of the utility of changes, we neither feel, nor wish for any in our friendships, and consequently stand just where we did with respect to your whole self.

Yours, my dear sir,

W. C.

LETTER XC.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 16, 1782.

Carraccioli says——"There "is something very bewitching in authorship, and "that he who has once written, will write again." It may be so——I can subscribe to the former part of his assertion from my own experience, having never found an amusement, among the many I have been obliged to have recourse to, that so well answered the purpose for which I used it. The quieting and composing effect of it was such, and so to-

tally absorbed have I sometimes been, in my rhyming occupation, that neither the past, nor the future, (those themes which to me are so fruitful in regret at other times,) had any longer a share in my contemplation. For this reason I wish, and have often wished, since the fit left me, that it would seize me again; but hitherto I have wished it in vain. I see no want of subjects, but I feel a total disability to discuss them. Whether it is thus with other writers or not, I am ignorant, but I should suppose my case in this respect, a little peculiar. The voluminous writers at least, whose vein of fancy seems always to have been rich in proportion to their occasions, cannot have been so unlike, and so unequal to themselves. There is this difference between my poetship and the generality of *them* ——they have been ignorant how much they have stood indebted to an Almighty power, for the exercise of those talents they have supposed their own. Whereas I know, and know most perfectly, and am perhaps to be taught it to the last, that my power to think, whatever it be, and consequently my power to compose, is, as much as my outward form, afforded to me by the same hand that makes me, in any respect, to differ from a brute.

This lesson, if not constantly inculcated, might perhaps be forgotten, or at least too slightly remembered.

W. C.

LETTER XCI.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 24, 1782.

My dear friend, if I should receive a letter from you to-morrow, you must still remember, that I am not in your debt, having paid you by anticipation.—Knowing that you take an interest in my publication, and that you have waited for it with some impatience, I write to inform you, that, if it is possible for a printer to be punctual, I shall come forth on the first of March. I have ordered two copies to Stock; one for Mr. John Unwin.—It is possible after all, that my book may come forth without a preface. Mr. Newton has written (he could indeed write no other) a very sensible, as well as a very friendly one; and it is printed. But the bookseller, who knows him well, and esteems

him highly, is anxious to have it cancelled, and, with my consent first obtained, has offered to negociate that matter with the author.——He judges, that, though it would serve to recommend the volume to the religious, it would disgust the profane, and that there is in reality, no need of a preface at all. I have found Johnson a very judicious man, on other occasions, and am therefore willing that he should determine for me upon this.

There are but few persons, to whom I present my book. The Lord Chancellor is one. I enclose in a pacquet I send by this post to Johnson, a letter to his Lordship, which will accompany the volume; and to you I enclose a copy of it, because I know you will have a friendly curiosity to see it. An author is an important character. Whatever his merits may be, the mere circumstance of authorship warrants his approach to persons; whom otherwise perhaps he could hardly address without being deemed impertinent. He can do me no good. If I should happen to do him a little, I shall be a greater man than he. I have ordered a copy likewise to Mr. S.

I hope John continues to be pleased, and to give pleasure. If he loves instruction, he has a

tutor who can give him plentifully of what he loves; and with his natural abilities, his progress must be such as you would wish.

Yours,

W. C.

LETTER XCII.

To Lord THURLOW.

(ENCLOSED TO MR. UNWIN.)

Olney, Bucks. Feb. 25, 1782.

MY LORD,

I make no apology for what I account a duty! I should offend against the cordiality of our former friendship, should I send a volume into the world, and forget how much I am bound to pay my particular respects to your Lordship upon that occasion: When we parted, you little thought of hearing from me again; and I as little, that I should live to write to you, still less, that I should wait on you in the capacity of an author.

Among the pieces I have the honour to send,

there is one, for which I must intreat your pardon. I mean that, of which your Lordship is the subject. The best excuse I can make is, that it flowed almost spontaneously from the affectionate remembrance of a connexion that did me so much honor.

As to the rest, their merits, if they have any, and their defects, which are probably more than I am aware of, will neither of them escape your notice. But where there is much discernment, there is generally much candour; and I commit myself into your Lordship's hands with the less anxiety, being well acquainted with yours.

If my first visit, after so long an interval, should prove neither a troublesome, nor a dull one, but especially, if not altogether an unprofitable one, *omne tuli punctum*.

I have the honour to be, though with very different impressions of some subjects, yet with the same sentiments of affection and esteem as ever, your Lordship's faithful, and most obedient, humble servant,

W. C.

LETTER XCIII.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

February, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I enclose Johnson's letter upon the subject of the Preface, and would send you my reply to it, if I had kept a copy. This however was the purport of it. That Mr. ——, whom I described, as you described him to me, had made a similar objection, but that being willing to hope, that two or three pages of sensible matter, well expressed, might possibly go down, though of a religious cast, I was resolved to believe him mistaken, and to pay no regard to it. That *his* judgment however, who by his occupation is bound to understand what will promote the sale of a book, and what will hinder it, seemed to deserve more attention. That therefore, according to his own offer, written on a small slip of paper now lost, I should be obliged to him if he would state his difficulties to you; adding, I need not inform *him*, who is so well acquainted with you, that he would find you easy to be persuaded to sacrifice, if necessary, what you had writ-

ten, to the interests of the book. I find he has had an interview with you upon the occasion, and your behaviour in it has verified my prediction. What course he determines upon, I do not know, nor am I at all anxious about it. It is impossible for me however, to be so insensible of your kindness in writing the Preface, as not to be desirous of defying all contingencies, rather than entertain a wish to suppress it. It will do me honor in the eyes of those, whose good opinion is indeed an honor, and if it hurts me in the estimation of others, I cannot help it; the fault is neither yours, nor mine, but theirs. If a minister's is a more splendid character than a poet's, and I think nobody that understands their value can hesitate in deciding that question, then undoubtedly the advantage of having our names united in the same volume, is all on my side.

We thank you for the Fast-sermon, I had not read two pages before I exclaimed——the man has read Expostulation. But though there is a strong resemblance between the two pieces, in point of matter, and sometimes the very same expressions are to be met with, yet I soon recollected, that on such a theme, a striking coincidence of both might happen without a wonder. I doubt not that it is

the production of an honest man, it carries with it an air of sincerity and zeal, that is not easily counterfeited. But though I can see no reason, why kings should not sometimes hear of their faults, as well as other men, I think I see many good ones why they should not be reproved so publicly. It can hardly be done with that respect which is due to their office, on the part of the author, or without encouraging a spirit of unmannerly censure in his readers. His majesty too perhaps might answer—my own personal feelings, and offences, I am ready to confess, but where I to follow your advice, and cashier the profligate from my service, where must I seek men of faith, and true Christian piety, qualified by nature and by education, to succeed them? Business must be done, men of business alone can do it, and good men are rarely found, under that description. When Nathan reproved David, he did not employ an herald, or accompany his charge with the sound of the trumpet; nor can I think the writer of this sermon quite justifiable in exposing the king's faults in the sight of the people.

Your answer respecting Ætna is quite satisfactory, and gives me much pleasure. I hate altering, though I never refuse the task when propriety

seems to enjoin it; and an alteration in this instance, if I am not mistaken, would have been singularly difficult. Indeed, when a piece has been finished two or three years, and an author finds occasion to amend, or make an addition to it, it is not easy to fall upon the very vein, from which he drew his ideas in the first instance, but either a different turn of thought or expression, will betray the patch, and convince a reader of discernment, that it has been cobbled and varnished.

Our love to you both, and to the young Euphrosyne! the old lady of that name being long since dead, if she pleases she shall fill her vacant office, and be my muse hereafter.

Yours, my dear sir,

W. C.

LETTER XCIV.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

March 6, 1782.

Is peace the nearer because our patriots have resolved that it is desirable? Will the victory they have gained in the House of Com-

mons be attended with any other? Do they expect the same success on other occasions, and having once gained a majority, are they to be the majority for ever?——These are the questions we agitate by the fire-side in an evening, without being able to come to any certain conclusion, partly I suppose, because the subject is in itself uncertain, and partly because we are not furnished with the means of understanding it. I find the politics of times past, far more intelligible than those of the present. Time has thrown light upon what was obscure, and decided what was ambiguous. The characters of great men, which are always mysterious while they live, are ascertained by the faithful historian, and sooner or later receive the wages of fame or infamy, according to their true deserts. How have I seen sensible and learned men, burn incense to the memory of Oliver Cromwell, ascribing to him, as the greatest hero in the world, the dignity of the British empire, during the interregnum. A century passed before that idol, which seemed to be of gold, was proved to be a wooden one. The fallacy however was at length detected, and the honor of that detection has fallen to the share of a woman. I do not know whether you have read Mrs. Macauley's history of that pe-

riod. She has handled him more roughly than the Scots did at the battle of Dunbar. He would have thought it little worth his while to have broken through all obligations divine and human, to have wept crocodile's tears, and wrapt himself up in the obscurity of speeches that nobody could understand, could he have foreseen that in the ensuing century, a lady's scissars would clip his laurels close, and expose his naked villany to the scorn of all posterity. This however has been accomplished, and so effectually, that I suppose it is not in the power of the most artificial management to make them grow again. Even the sagacious of mankind are blind, when Providence leaves them to be deluded; so blind, that a tyrant shall be mistaken for a true patriot: true patriots (such were the Long Parliament) shall be abhorred as tyrants, and almost a whole nation shall dream that they have the full enjoyment of liberty, for years after such a complete knave as Oliver shall have stolen it completely from them. I am indebted for all this show of historical knowledge to Mr. Bull, who has lent me five volumes of the work I mention. I was willing to display it while I have it; in a twelvemonth's time, I shall remember almost nothing of the matter.

W. C.

LETTER XCV.

To the Rev. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 7, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We have great pleasure in the contemplation of your Northern journey, as it promises us a sight of you and yours by the way, and are only sorry Miss Shuttleworth cannot be of the party. A line to ascertain the hour, when we may expect you, by the next preceding post will be welcome.

It is not much for my advantage, that the printer delays so long to gratify your expectation. It is a state of mind, that is apt to tire and disconcert us; and there are but few pleasures, that make us amends for the pain of repeated disappointment. I take it for granted you have not received the volume, not having received it myself, nor indeed heard from Johnson, since he fixed the first of the month for its publication.

What a medley are our public prints, half the page filled with the ruin of the country, and the other half filled with the vices and pleasures of it—here is an island taken, and there a new comedy—

here an empire lost, and there an Italian opera, or a Lord's rout on a Sunday!

"May it please your Lordship! I am an En-
"glishman, and must stand or fall with the nation.
"Religion, its true Palladium, has been stolen away;
"and it is crumbling into dust. Sin ruins us, the
"sins of the great especially, and of their sins espe-
"cially the violation of the sabbath, because it is
"naturally productive of all the rest. If you wish
"well to our arms, and would be glad to see the
"kingdom emerging from her ruins, pay more re-
"spect to an ordinance, that deserves the deepest!
"I do not say pardon this short remonstrance!——
"The concern I feel for my country, and the inte-
"rest I have in its prosperity, give me a right to
"make it. I am, &c."

Thus one might write to his Lordship, and (I suppose) might be as profitably employed in whistling the tune of an old ballad.

I have no copy of the Preface, nor do I know at present, how Johnson and Mr. Newton have settled it. In the matter of it there was nothing offensively peculiar. But it was thought too pious.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

LETTER XCVI.

To the Rev. JOHN NEWTON.

March 14, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I can only repeat what I said some time since, that the world is grown more foolish, and careless than it was, when I had the honor of knowing it. Though your Preface was of a serious cast, it was yet free from every thing that might, with propriety, expose it to to the charge of Methodism, being guilty of no offensive peculiarities, nor containing any of those obnoxious doctrines, at which the world is so apt to be angry, and which we must give her leave to be angry at, because we know she cannot help it. It asserted nothing more than every rational creature must admit to be true——"that divine and earthly things can "no longer stand in competition with each other, "in the judgment of any man, than while he conti-"nues ignorant of their respective value, and that "the moment the eyes are opened, the latter are "always cheerfully relinquished for the sake of the "former." Now I do most certainly remember the time when such a proposition as this would have

been at least supportable, and when it would not have spoiled the market of any volume, to which it had been prefixed, ergo—the times are altered for the worse.

I have reason to be very much satisfied with my publisher—he marked such lines as did not please him, and as often as I could, I paid all possible respect to his animadversions. You will accordingly find, at least if you recollect how they stood in the MS. that several passages are better for having undergone his critical notice. Indeed I do not know where I could have found a bookseller who could have pointed out to me my defects with more discernment, and as I find it is a fashion for modern bards, to publish the names of the literati, who have favored their works with a revisal, would myself most willingly have acknowledged my obligations to Johnson, and so I told him. I am to thank you likewise, and ought to have done it in the first place, for having recommended to me the suppression of some lines, which I am now more than ever convinced would at least have done me no honor.

W. C.

The immediate success of his first volume was very far from being equal to its extraordinary merit. For some time, it seemed to be neglected by the public; though the first poem in the collection contains such a powerful image of its author, as might be thought sufficient not only to excite attention, but to secure attachment: for Cowper had undesignedly executed a masterly portrait of himself, in describing the true poet: I allude to the following verses in "*Table Talk*."

Nature, exerting an unwearied power,
Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower;
Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads
The dancing Naiads thro' the dewy meads:
She fills, profuse, ten thousand little throats
With music, modulating all their notes:
And charms the woodland scenes, and wilds unknown,
With artless airs, and concerts of her own;
But seldom (as if fearful of expence)
Vouchsafes to man a poet's just pretence—
Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,
Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought;
Fancy, that from the bow that spans the sky
Brings colours, dipt in Heaven, that never die;
A soul exalted above earth, a mind
Skill'd in the characters that form mankind;

And, as the sun, in rising beauty drest,
Looks from the dappled orient to the west,
And marks, whatever clouds may interpose,
Ere yet his race begins, its glorious close,
An eye like his, to catch the distant goal,
Or, ere the wheels of verse begin to roll,
Like his to shed illuminating rays
On every scene and subject it surveys:
Thus grac'd, the man asserts a poet's name,
And the world cheerfully admits the claim.

The concluding lines may be considered as an omen of that celebrity, which such a writer, in the process of time, could not fail to obtain. Yet powerful as the claims of Cowper were, to instant admiration and applause, it must be allowed (as an apology for the inattention of the public) that he hazarded some sentiments in his first volume, which were very likely to obstruct its immediate success in the world. I particularly allude to his bold eulogy on Whitefield, whom the dramatic satire of Foote, in his comedy of "*The Minor*," had induced the nation to deride as a mischievous fanatic. I allude also to a little acrimonious censure, in which he had indulged himself, against one of Whitefield's devout rivals, Mr. Charles Wesley, for allowing sacred mu-

sic to form a part of his occupation in a Sunday evening. Such praise, and such reproof, might easily induce many careless readers, unacquainted with the singular mildness, and purity of character, that really belonged to the new poet, to reject his book, without giving it a fair perusal, as the production of a recluse, inflamed with the fierce spirit of bigotry. No supposition could have been wider from the truth; for Cowper was indeed a rare example of true Christian benevolence: yet, as the best of men have their little occasional foibles, he allowed himself, sometimes with his pen, but never I believe in conversation, to speak rather acrimoniously of several pursuits and pastimes, that seem not to deserve any austerity of reproof. Of this, he was aware himself, and confessed it, in the most ingenuous manner, on the following occasion. One of his intimate friends had written, in the first volume of his poems, the following passage from the younger Pliny, as descriptive of the book: "*Multa tenuiter, multa sublimiter, multa venuste, multa tenere, multa dulciter, multa cum bile.*" Many passages are delicate, many sublime, many beautiful, many tender, many sweet, many acrimonious.

Cowper was pleased with the application, and

said, with the utmost candour and sincerity, "The "latter part is very true indeed: Yes! yes! there "are *multa cum bile*, many acrimonious."

These little occasional touches of austerity would naturally arise in a life so sequestered: but how just a subject of surprize and admiration is it, to behold an author starting, under such a load of disadvantages, and displaying, on the sudden, such a variety of excellence! For neglected, as it was for a few years, the first volume of Cowper exhibits such a diversity of poetical powers, as have been given very rarely indeed to any individual of the modern, or of the antient world. He is not only great in passages of pathos, and sublimity; but he is equally admirable in wit and humour. After descanting, most copiously, on sacred subjects, with the animation of a prophet, and the simplicity of an apostle, he paints the ludicrous characters of common life, with the comic force of Moliere; particularly in his poem on Conversation, and his exquisite portrait of a fretful temper; a piece of moral painting, so highly finished, and so happily calculated to promote good humour, that a transcript of the verses shall close the first part of these memoirs.

Some fretful tempers wince at every touch;
You always do too little, or too much:
You speak with life, in hopes to entertain;
Your elevated voice goes through the brain:
You fall at once into a lower key;
That's worse;——the drone-pipe of an humble-bee!
The southern sash admits too strong a light;
You rise and drop the curtain:——now its night.
He shakes with cold;——you stir the fire, and strive
To make a blaze:——that's roasting him alive.
Serve him with ven'son, and he chuses fish;
With soal, that's just the sort he would not wish.
He takes what he at first profess'd to loath;
And in due time feeds heartily on both:
Yet, still o'erclouded with a constant frown,
He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.
Your hope to please him vain on every plan,
Himself would work that wonder if he can.
Alas! his efforts double his distress;
He likes your's little, and his own still less.
Thus always teazing others, always teaz'd,
His only pleasure is——to be displeas'd.

END OF THE FIRST PART, AND OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

INDEX.

An introductory Letter to the Right Honourable Earl Cowper.

Desultory Remarks on the Letters of eminent persons, particularly those of Pope and Cowper.

LIFE OF COWPER, PART THE FIRST.

Letter. Page.

The Family, birth, and first residence of Cowper 75
His verses on the portrait of his mother 79
Her epitaph by her Niece 81
The schools that Cowper attended 84
His sufferings during childhood 84
His removal from Westminster to an attorney's office 89
Verses on his early afflictions 90
His settlement in the Inner-temple 91
His acquaintance with eminent authors 92
His epistle to Robert Lloyd, Esq. 93
His translations in Duncomb's Horace 97
His own account of his early life 98
Stanzas on reading Sir Charles Grandison 99
His verses on finding the heel of a shoe 101
His nomination to the office of Reading Clerk in the House of Commons 104
His nomination to be Clerk of the Journals in the House of Lords 104
1 To Lady Hesketh. Journal of the House of Commons; reflection of the singular temper of his mind. Aug. 3, 1763 .. 105
His extreme dread of appearing in public 107
His derangement, and removal to St. Alban's 108
His recovery 109
His settlement at Huntingdon to be near his brother 111
The translation of Voltaire's Henriade by the two brothers .. 112
The origin of Cowper's acquaintance with the Unwins 114

Letter. Page.
His adoption into the family 116
His early friendship with Lord Thurlow, and J. Hill, Esq. ..117

1765.

2 To Joseph Hill, Esq. Account of his situation at Huntingdon. June 24..119
3 To Lady Hesketh. On his illness and subsequent recovery July 1..121
4 To the same. Salutary effects on the human mind. July 4..123
5 To the same. Account of Huntingdon: distance from his brother, &c. ..... July 5..127
6 To the same. Newton's treatise on prophecy; reflections on Dr. Young, on the truth of Christianity .... July 12..130
7 To the same On the beauty and sublimity of scriptural language. ..... August 1..133
8 To the same. Pearsall's meditation; definition of faith August 17..137
9 To the same. On a particular providence; experience of mercy, &c. ..... Sept. 4..139
10 To the same. First introduction to the Unwin family; their characters ..... Sept. 14..144
11 To the same. On the thankfulness of the heart, its inequalities, &c. ..... Oct. 10..147
12 To the same. Miss Unwin, her charater and piety. Oct. 18..149
13 To Major Cowper. Situation at Huntingdon; his perfect satisfaction, &c. ..... Oct. 18..152
14 To Joseph Hill, Esq. On those who confine all merits to their own acquaintance. ..... Oct. 25..155

1766.

15 To Lady Hesketh. On solitude; on the desertion of his friends ..... March 6..158
16 To Mrs. Cowper. Mrs. Unwin, and her son; his cousin Martin. 161
17 To the same. Letters the fruit of friendship; his conversion April 4..163
18 To the same. The probability of knowing each other in Heaven. ..... April 17..165

Letter. Page.

19 To the same. On the recollection of earthly affairs by departed spirits. ..... April 18..170

20 To the same. On the same subject; on his own state of body and mind..... ..... Sept. 3..174

21 To the same. His mannner of living; reasons for his not taking orders. ..... Oct. 20..178

1767.

22 To the same. Reflections arising from reading Marshal. March 11..181

23 To the same. Introduction of Mr. Unwin's son; his gardening; on Marshall. ..... March 14..184

24 To the same. On the motive of his introducing Mr. Unwin's son to her. ..... April 3..186

25 To the same. Mr. Unwin's death; doubts concerning his future abode. ..... July 13..189

26 To Joseph hill' Esq. Reflections arising from Mr. Unwin's death. ..... July 16..191

The origin of Cowper's acquaintance with Mr. Newton....192

The death of Mr. Unwin, and Cowper's removal with Mrs. Unwin to Olney. 193

His devotion and charity in his new residence. 193

27 To the same. On the occurrences during his visit at St. Alban's. ..... June 16, 1768..194

1769.

28 To the same. On the difference of dispositions; his love of retirement. 195

His poem in memory of John Thornton, Esq. 197

His beneficence to a necessitous child. 199

The composition of his hymns. 200

29 To Mrs. Cowper. His new situation; reasons for mixture of evil in the world..... 201

30 To the same. The consolations of religion on the death of her husband ..... August 31..204

Cowper's journey to London on his brother's illness.....206

1770.

31 To the same. Dangerous illness of his brother. Mar. 5..207

The death and character of Cowper's Brother..... ...208

Letter. Page.

32 To Joseph Hill, Esq: Religious sentiments of his brother, May 8..211

33 To Mrs. Cowper. The same subject.....June 7..214

34 To Joseph Hill, Esq. Expression of his gratitude for instances of friendship.....Sept. 25..218

The composition of the Olney hymns by Mr. Newton, and Cowper.....219

The interruption of the Olney hymns by the illness of Cowper 220

His long and severe depression.....222

His tame hares, one of his first amusements on his recovery...223

The origin of his friendship with Mr. Bull.....224

His translations from Madam de la Mothe Guion.....224

35 To the Rev. W. Unwin. The same subject; of supplicatory Letters, &c.....June 18..226

1779.

36 To the same. Johnson's Lives of the Poets.....May 26..228

37 To the same. His hot-house; tame pigeons; visit to Gayhurst.....Sept. 21..229

38 To the same. Johnson's Biography; his treatment of Milton Oct. 31..231

39 To the same. Quick succession of human events; modern patriotism.....Dec. 2..234

1780.

40 To the same. Burk's speech on the reformation; Nightingale and Glow-worm.....Feb. 27..236

41 To the Rev. J. Newton. On the danger of innovation March 18..239

42 To the Rev. W. Unwin. On keeping the sabbath. Mar. 28..241

43 To the same. Plurahties in the church.....April 6..243

44 To the Rev. J. Newton. Distinction between a travelled-man, and a travelled-gentleman.....April 16..246

45 To the same. Serious reflections on rural scenery. May 3..247

46 To J. Hill, Esq. The Chancellor's (T—w) illness. May6..250

47 To the Rev. W. Unwin. His passion for landscape drawing; modern politics.....May 8..252

48 To Mrs. Cowper. On her brother's death.....May 10..256

Letter. Page.

49 To the Rev. J. Newton. Pedantry of Commentators; Dr. Bentley, &c. ..... May 10..257

50 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Danger of endeavouring to excel; versification of a thought ..... June 8..259

51 To the Rev. J. Newton. On the riots in 1780; danger of associations ..... June 12..263

52 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Latin verses on ditto..June 18..265

53 To the same. Robertson's History; Biographia Britannica. June 22..269

54 To the Rev. J. Newton. Ingenuity of slanderers, lace-maker's petition ..... June 29..271

55 To the Rev. W. Unwin. To touch and retouch the secret of good writing; an epitaph ..... July 2..275

56 To J. Hill, Esq. Recommendation of the lace-makers petition. ..... July 8..277

57 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Translation of the Latin verses on the riots in 1780 ..... July 11..279

58 To Mrs. Cowper. On the insensible progress of age July 20..282

59 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Olney bridge. ..... July 27..285

60 To the Rev. J. Newton. A riddle ..... July 30..287

61 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Human nature not changed; a modern, only an antient in a different dress ..Aug. 6..289

62 To the Rev. J. Newton. Escape of one of his hares. August 21..291

63 To Mrs. Cowper. Lady Cowper's death; age a friend to the mind ..... August 31..293

64 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Biographia; verses, parson and clerk. ..... Sept. 3..297

65 To the same. On Education ..... Sept. 7..300

66 To the same. Public schools ..... Sept. 17..303

67 To the same. On the same subject ..... Oct. 5..306

68 To Mrs. Newton. On Mr. Newton's arrival at Ramsgate. Oct. 5..310

69 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Verses on a goldfinch starved to death in his cage ..... Nov. 9..312

Letter Page.

70 To J. Hill, Esq. With the memorable law-case between nose and eyes ..... Dec. 25..313

71 To the Rev. W. Unwin. With the same..... Dec ..317

1781.

72 To J. Hill, Esq. On metrical law-cases; old age. Feb. 15..319

73 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Consolations on the asperity of a critic. ..... April 2..321

74 To the same. Publication of his first volume..May 1..325

75 To J. Hill, Esq. On the composition and publication of his first volume ..... May 9..328

76 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Reasons for not shewing his preface to Mr. Unwin..... May 10..330

77 To the same. Delay of his publication; Vincent Bourne, and his poems. ..... May 23..332

78 To the same. Correction of his proofs; on his horsemanship ..... May ..338

79 To the same. Mrs. Unwin's criticisms; a distinguishing providence. ..... June 5..340

80 To the same. On the design of his poems; Mr. Unwin's bashfulness. ..... June 24..343

81 To the same. Thanks for some rugs; on the fashion of wearing wigs ..... July 6..348

82 To the Rev. J. Newton. In rhyme, on his poetry. July 12..350

83 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Brighton amusements; his projected authorship. ..... Oct. 6..352

84 To Mrs. Cowper. His first volume; death of a friend. Oct. 19..355

85 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Brighton dissipation; education of young Unwin ..... Nov. 5..359

86 To the same. Origin and causes of social feeling Nov. 26..362

1782.

87 To the same. Johnson's character of Prior and Pope. Jan. 5..366

88 To the same. Danger of criticism to the taste; young Unwin's education ..... Jan 17..370

Letter. Page.
89 To the Rev. J. Newton. His intended publication. Feb. 2 . . 375
90 To the same. Pleasures of authorship . . . . . Feb. 16 . . 379
91 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Mr. Newton's preface; the dignity of authorship . . . . . Feb. 24 . . 381
92 To Lord Thurlow. With his first vol. of poems. Feb. 25 . . 383
93 To the Rev. J. Newton. Thoughts on reproving kings. Feb. . . 385
94 To the same. Past and present politics . . . . . March 6 . . 388
95 To the Rev. W. Unwin. On the news-papers. March 7 . . 391
96 To the Rev. J. Newton. Mr. Newton's preface, and Johnson's criticisms. . . . . March 14 . . 393
The inadequate success of his first volume 395
Probable reasons of the neglect it at first experienced. 396
Example of Cowper's ingenuousness in speaking of himself . . 397
The various kinds of excellence in his first volume. 398

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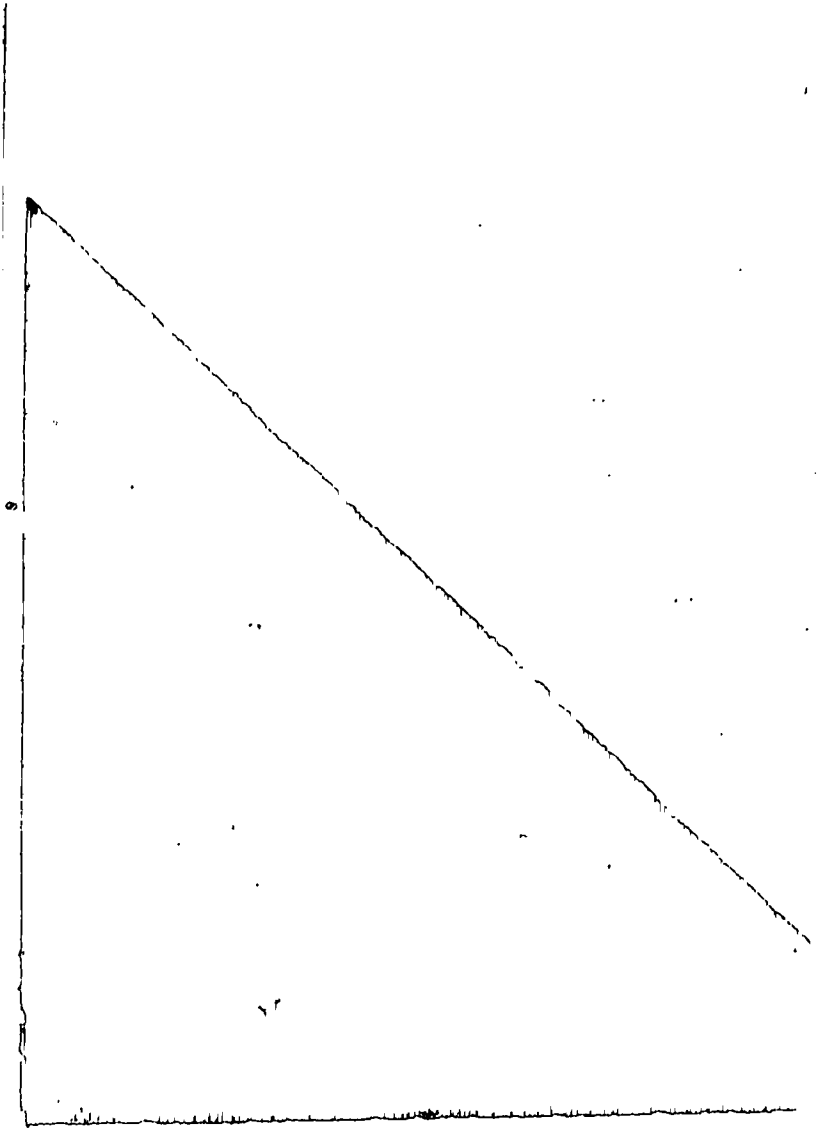

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